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THE MYSTERY OF JESUS

By

DOM SAVINIEN LOUISMET, O.S.B.

Author of "The Mystical Knowledge of God," etc., etc.

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PREFACE

THIS new volume is the fifth in the series of treatises on mystical theology which wisely or perhaps foolishly I began publishing a few years ago, and still fondly hope, with God's grace and the help of the many prayers of my brethren, to bring to completion within a few more years.

In the preceding treatise, on DIVINE CONTEMPLATION FOR ALL, my aim has been to give a general idea of the first and most important function of the mystical life. Now, in the further development of this subject of divine contemplation, the logical order demands that, from the abstract and general, we should come down to the concrete; that is to say, that we should proceed to treat of the very object of contemplation.

This object is twofold, namely: first, in the order of dignity, the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, and then, secondly, that of the Sacred Humanity of Our Lord.

In the present volume we treat only of this second object, reserving the first for another volume, because in the order of execution the loving contemplation of Our Lord takes precedence, as it paves the way to that of the Blessed Trinity. "*I am the Way*," says Our Lord.

From our title it must not be inferred that we

are here presenting to the public a learned or technical treatise. Indeed, the purpose of this little book is not science—not even the science of Jesus for its own sake—but love: honey-sweet, delectable, inebriating, all consuming love. Whatever we say herein must be turned exclusively to the purposes of love.

The treatise is divided into three distinct parts, thus:

1. Preliminaries.
2. The amazing human life of Christ on earth.
3. Mighty sequels, in time and eternity, to the human life of Christ on earth.

Here and there, though sparingly, I have ventured to give free rein to my own feelings on so entrancing a subject; and, at times, I have also drawn upon the mystical experiences of others of which I have been either the confidant or, even in a way, the happy witness: thinking that it might be some help to souls of good will. I hope people will not, in consequence, conceive any high opinion of me, or on the other hand, accuse me of having betrayed *the secret of the King*. The things I have set down in these pages are only on the fringe of the contemplation of Jesus. They are not it, but they certainly proclaim its near approach: just as, of old, in the temple of Jerusalem, the tiny golden bells, around the high-priest's robes, betrayed his approach by their melodious jarrings and jinglings.

There is infinitely better than what can be set down in writing. As long as the mystical experience can be expressed, it is not much:

there still remains what can never be told in human speech.

Lord Jesus, thou knowest how dissatisfied I am with this last production of my pen, the puny result of nearly three years of hard work and intense prayer; how I feel its falling so short of the high mark I had aimed at. Twice did it write it all over, the first draft displeasing me utterly, whilst I can hardly say whether this second one be much better. However, I must be content to give it to the public as it now stands, for there are ever so many of the readers of my former treatises who are clamouring for it and I ought not to disappoint them much longer.

For one thing I may rejoice; however great be the shortcomings of this little book, Thy sweet name, O my dear Lord, is written all over it. Then, also, the unworthiness of my discourse is often relieved by generous quotations of Thy Holy Writ. And I know that Thy grace will help pious readers to find more in these pages than I have actually set down. For, indeed, how could a sinful man, in his mortality, express Thee, my Lord, who art the eternal joyful wonder of the angelic hosts?

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PART I

PRELIMINARIES

"Sweeter delight I know not than in my heart to sing Thee Jesu, whom I love, a song of Thy praise."—Richard Rolle, in *The Fire of Love*, Book 2, ch. xii.

The Mystery of Jesus

CHAPTER I

The Mystery which is Christ

PRAYING . . . that God may open unto us a door of speech to speak the mystery of Jesus. (Col. iv, 3.)

We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery which is hidden, which God ordained before the world unto our glory. (1 Cor. ii, 7.) *The mystery which was kept secret from eternity.* (Rom. xvi, 25.) *The mystery which is Christ, which has been hidden from ages and generations, but now is manifested to his Saints.* (Col. i, 26-27.)

Mysteries, both natural and supernatural, surround us, press us and penetrate us on all sides. We are simply steeped in mysteries. We are to our very selves, and each one of the brethren is to us, a mystery or rather a sheaf of mysteries. The material universe we are in is an enormous congeries of mysteries: in the inscrutable depths of the firmament, in the atmosphere which envelops our planet, above and beneath the surface of the earth, in the oceans, are found mysteries upon mysteries and mysteries within mysteries.

Each tiny particle of matter, animate or in-

animate, is a little world and a formidable abyss which our short-sighted reason cannot fathom. Science has demonstrated that a single atom of matter has a more complicated structure than any Gothic cathedral. The last word as to its internal laws is yet to be said, and will very likely never be said by man this side of the grave. The more advance is made in the exploration of the infinitesimally small, the more also the goal of all researches, perfect knowledge, seems to recede and elude our grasp.

Then, infinitely transcending these natural mysteries, there are the supernatural ones of the realm of grace and of that of glory.

Innumerable as these also are, they may still be reduced for convenience sake to three most comprehensive ones in which all the others are included as circles within circles, *rota in rotam*, says Ezechiel. Thus:

First and foremost the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity of the Divine Persons.

Then, the mystery of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally, the mystery of the Church of Christ, in time and eternity.

Even these three distinct mysteries so intermingle or interpenetrate each other, and are so involved in each other, that at least to the eyes of our created intelligence they seem ultimately to run into just one huge mystery, namely the mystery of Jesus. For, indeed, the mystery of the Church of Christ is still the mystery of Jesus, since it is, in the main, the mystery of the extension of Jesus in all souls of good will, in this life and in the next.

On the other hand, Jesus being the Son of

God, one and the same God with the Father and the Holy Ghost, we cannot exclude Him from the mystery of the Blessed Trinity. Thus the mystery of Jesus stretches out into all things divine and human and reaches out from eternity even unto eternity. Our Lord is in Himself the whole supernatural order, and He moreover takes unto Himself and sanctifies and transfigures the whole natural order. Whatever is outside of Him and refuses to become one with Him, is doomed; although the process of elimination and separation from Jesus comes not from Him, but from reasonable creatures, whether angels or men, making a wrong use of their freedom to choose.

We have been told, in books purporting to unfold to us the divine plan, that the supernatural order is built upon the natural. It so appears at a first glance, when we look at things as they are mirrored in the medium of our prejudiced mind, instead of viewing them as they really stand in their mutual relations. We are, then, victims of the same illusion as the man who, looking at a landscape reflected in a lake, would persuade himself that the world is upside down. But, if we place ourselves at the right view-point, which is that of God, we shall realize that God has created all things in Christ and for Christ, in close dependence and strict subordination to Him.

The sacred humanity is the *primum volitum*, the very first object God had in view in creating the world. It is in Jesus Christ and in reference to Him that God has willed the rest of created things, this world of angels and men and lower

beings. It is in him that God has loved us from all eternity and has brought us into actual existence and has co-ordinated the entire providential plan of things: *in Christ* as St. Paul is so fond of repeating, "in Christ" and not otherwise.

Now, as the whole supernatural order is built upon the person of Our Lord—to be more precise, upon His sacred humanity—it follows that even the natural order rests upon the same sacred humanity, and has been created for its sake. All things visible and invisible, angels, men and inferior creatures are in an absolute dependence on the sacred humanity of Our Lord and exist only for His sake: *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, saith the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty. . . . I am the first and the last, and alive and was dead and behold I am living for ever and ever, and have the keys of death and of hell.* (Apoc. i, 8-18.)

O, dear Lord Jesus, thou art truly the first and the last word of God, the first and the last word of the whole universe of things visible and invisible, the first and the last word of all in time and eternity: be Thou also the first and the last word of Thy poor servant, every day of his life, in all his undertakings, but most particularly at the time of recollection and prayer. I want to contemplate this sublime mystery which Thou art, I want to grow more and more enamoured of it; to live upon it; to inhale its delectable, substantial perfume, and to breathe it out all around me, until Thou at last be pleased to call me to the beatific vision of Thy

glory with the Father and the Holy Ghost in heaven.

Jesus! sweet Lord and Love! Oh! may it please Thine infinite goodness to shed upon me the radiance of Thine adorable countenance, of Thy five Wounds, of Thy gracious eyes, of Thy loving Heart, of Thy dear Soul, of Thy Godhead! Then shall I fall at Thy Feet as dead. Then wilt Thou lay Thy right hand upon me saying: *Fear not.* . . . Then will the unutterable take place.

CHAPTER II

How to begin the Loving Contemplation of Our Lord

JESUS answered and said to the Samaritan woman: If thou didst know the gift of God and who he is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou perhaps wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. (John iv, 10.)

Now, the contemplation of Jesus is often inaugurated just like that.

There is a seemingly casual meeting of Our Lord with some soul, perhaps actually in a state of great unreadiness. But the hour of grace has struck. The two confront each other. There is Jesus who is the gift of God to us men, *for God so loved the world as to give it His only begotten Son* (John iii, 16), and there is that poor sinful or lukewarm Christian, who hitherto has but little appreciated this gift of the Father.

Let the soul whom Jesus meets thus, only listen to what He has to say. Now He says in the depth of her heart: *Give me to drink*—not indeed a drink of earthly water out of an earthen vessel, but out of the cup of thine own heart, the generous wine of all thy affections. The poor soul is quite overcome at such an unexpected request. She replies: "How is this, that thou being sanctity itself should speak to such an unworthy sinner as I am?" But Jesus does

not mind the interruption. He pursues: "If thou only didst know Me in My true character of a loving and merciful Saviour! However, give Me the drink I ask of thee, and see what I shall give thee in return: the living water of My own sweetest, dearest love in time and for all eternity."

Who would not be that happy soul? O, my brother, it is for us to be it. You know where you can meet Him, and speak with Him. You know what He will want of you and what He will press upon you in exchange. Now all this is the work of contemplation. The inspired writer exhorts us in these words: *Seek ye his face evermore.* (1 Paral. xvi, 11.)

The face of my Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament! The white species within the span of a narrow circle! That is all I can see of Him there, and it is only His veil, not His sweet self, only the veil behind which He hides His tremendous majesty, that I may approach Him without fear and receive Him. But oh! can anything more touching and moving be imagined than such a presentation of Himself by *the King of Glory?* How I must love to contemplate Him thus and pour out to Him all the treasures of tenderness and affectionateness of my heart.

O Salutaris hostia!

It is not difficult even at all hours of the day and night, with the eyes of faith, to penetrate behind the closed doors of the tabernacle and see Him as He is there, and pour out to Him our love.

Nor is it difficult, after a time, with a very slight exercise of the imagination, to discover

within the circle of the sacred species of bread, a tiny representation of Our Lord in the very mystery of His which we may be contemplating at the time. For in His Blessed Sacrament, Jesus has contrived to make Himself into a living memento and a breathing monument of all and each of His mysteries. Says the Psalmist: "*He hath made a remembrance of His wonderful works, being a merciful and gracious Lord; He hath given food to them that fear Him.*" (Ps. cx, 4-5.)

Seek ye His face evermore in the Gospel story. The face of the tiny Babe of Bethlehem, the eager, joyful face of the little Christ Child, the thoughtful face of the sweet boy of twelve among the doctors; the face of the young carpenter growing into manhood, the face of the *Son of Man* preparing for His public work which is at hand; the face of the preacher of the Gospel of the Kingdom, of the good Shepherd, of the friend of poor sinners!

Then the face of my Jesus in His terrible agony in the garden; and a little after, the face of my Jesus buffeted, spat upon, crowned with thorns, covered with trickling blood. Then at the end of His three hours on the cross, the face of my Jesus wan, absolutely bloodless, surrendered to death. Ah! let me seek His face evermore in all these mysteries of His beautiful life and of His cruel death!

And then, the face of my Jesus risen from the dead, appearing to His sweet Mother, and to His special friend Mary Magdalen, and to His Apostles, and conversing with them so sweetly and so lovingly. Then also the face

of my Jesus in glory, seated at the right hand of His Heavenly Father. If you be risen with Christ, seek ye the things that are above where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. (Col. iii, 1.)

Now, all these successive contemplations of the one object of our passionate love under various aspects, will finally lead us up, even during these days of our exile, to a certain obscure contemplation of His face as *the Only Begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father* (John i, 18), thus giving us a foretaste of the beatific vision in paradise. This is the living water Jesus promises to whomsoever will give Him to drink.

If you ask me: When thus contemplating my Lord, what acts shall I produce? I would answer: Never mind trying to produce deliberately any particular acts: simply let yourself go, let your heart speak; say what comes; and if nothing comes, be content to stay thus simply gazing at Him, silently adoring Him.

CHAPTER III

The First Point in the Mystery of Jesus

IN the great mystery of Jesus we can consider three distinct sets of mysteries, namely, (1) The mysteries of His sacred Flesh and Blood; (2) Those of His blessed human soul; and (3) Those of His pure Godhead.

It is the contemplation of the sacred humanity of Our Lord, that is to say, of His human body and soul which will engross our attention in these pages. Nevertheless we must needs take our starting-point from this paramount feature in Jesus Christ, that He is God, and that according to the magnificent expression of St. Paul, *in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead corporally.* (Col. ii, 9.)

We shall return in a subsequent volume to the consideration of His Godhead for its own sake; for the present we notice it only in its relation to His sacred humanity; nevertheless we must at the outset give due prominence to this marvellous, all-entrancing fact of His being a divine person.

This historical personage, Jesus Christ, whose coming into the world, and whose human life, death, resurrection and after-life we are about to consider, IS GOD.

He is God from all eternity. He is God before His Incarnation and during it and after it, God uninterruptedly and for evermore.

Jesus is God from the first moment of His Incarnation; God in His human soul and in His human body, God in all His human acts.

He is, to use the words of the Nicene Creed, "the only begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all times, God of God, light of light, true God from true God, begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father, by whom all things have been made."

From whatever angle we view our Lord, whichever of His mysteries we are contemplating, we must never lose sight of this splendid fact that He is God. We could not prescind from it, even for the sake of argument, without the greatest risk of lapsing into material heresy.

Jesus being a divine person, it would seem as though when we have stated this supreme characteristic of His, nothing more could be added; as though no new feature of loveliness could be put on the brow of the infinitely lovely; but Our Lord has found the means of presenting Himself to our contemplation with increased loveliness, not indeed by adding anything to His native majesty, but rather by an inverse process, namely by putting away something of His own, and thus making His sweet Self nearer and more accessible to all and each of us.

He has made Himself obedient, and fulfilled the command of His Father who sent Him to us on earth. He has put on our human nature, taking upon Himself all our infirmities, sin excepted. Innocent and infinitely holy as He is, He allowed the very splendour of His sacred humanity to be obscured by the sufferings and ignominies of His passion and death.

In His holy sacrifice of the Mass and Eucharistic Sacrament, He puts away even the semblance of our human nature, thus to become our victim of oblation and the bread of our souls.

Now each one of these successive acts of His ought to add some new feature to His native loveliness as it is given to us to perceive it.

O, Jesus, thou art indeed, as the Word, *the brightness of eternal light and the unspotted mirror of God's majesty, and the image of his goodness* (Wisd. vii, 26), *Thou art* indeed *the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father* (John i, 18); but at present it is more to our liking and within the scope of our ability to contemplate Thee as the *Son of Man* and as the *Man of Sorrows*, as *the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world*, and as *the clean oblation offered in every place to the name of the Lord* (Mal. i, 11) as the *living bread which came down from heaven* (John vi, 41), as our *Emmanuel, God with us, the Word made flesh.*

CHAPTER IV

The Way to Proceed in this Contemplation

IT had been commanded to the Israelites of old, in regard to the paschal lamb: *You shall eat the head with the feet and entrails thereof.* (Ex. xii, 9.) This was in figure of the contemplation of Our Lord, this true Lamb of God: the head standing for His divine nature, the entrails for His sacred human soul, the feet with all the rest of the lamb for His sacred flesh and blood.

The right order of this contemplation is that we should exercise our loving attention, first of all, upon the mysteries of His sacred flesh and blood and His whole sensibility as summed up in His Sacred Heart; then upon the mysteries of His most holy human soul; then upon the mysteries of His Godhead, which will introduce us to the contemplation of the Blessed Trinity. Thus Jesus in His sacred humanity shows Himself truly *the way* that leads to the Father, the door which gives us access to the holy of holies of the Blessed Trinity, *the* very *key* that opens to us the treasury of the infinite perfections.

Indeed, before we can hope to see and taste how sweet the Lord God is in His pure essence, we must learn first to taste and see how sweet the sacred humanity of His divine Son is; we have to taste and see how sweet Jesus is in the

mysteries of His life, death, resurrection and glory.

Now we must realize that we are not alone in this work of the contemplation of Jesus. There are two persons concerned in it: firstly, the Christian who, roused by the grace of God, sets about this work, and then, secondly, Jesus whose sacred humanity is to be contemplated and who uses it as an instrument with which to act upon the soul of the contemplative. There are two energies at work: that of man seeking Our Lord, and that of Our Lord seeking the man of good will, meeting him more than half way, laying hands on all his faculties and communicating Himself to him with unspeakable tenderness.

So Jesus is not only the object of my contemplation, but He is all the while vitally acting upon my soul, and acting upon it with His own body and blood and heart and human soul; with His own life and doctrines and the virtues that emanate from Him. All this simply on condition that I go to Him not as to a lifeless model painted on the wall or sculptured on a pedestal, but as to my living and loving master, a marvellous teacher who does not only speak to the ears and to the eyes but to my inmost soul. Then Jesus takes me in hand and proceeds with my spiritual education. Can anything more desirable be thought of?

God had already conversed familiarly and lovingly with the first man in the garden of Eden and taken in hand the work of his supernatural education, when Adam, by his prevarication, brought this divine undertaking to a sudden

stop. Now, the Lord God, in His loving kindness, makes a new venture; but to be sure of a welcome on our part, He becomes man, our brother by flesh and blood and human love. It is in this new capacity of the Word made flesh, that He now attempts our new education if only we will respond to His sweetly compelling invitations.

Behold Adam is become like one of us (Gen. iii, 22), said God derisively of the first man after he had eaten of the forbidden fruit and thereby forfeited for himself and us all the privileges of primitive innocence. We have now our revenge, sweet revenge, provided by the Lord God Himself in the incarnation of his divine Son.

Behold God is become like one of us, we may exultantly cry out when we see the tiny infant Jesus at His virgin-mother's breast, or the little child Jesus innocently disporting with other children of His age, or the fair boy playing truant to those who will so terribly miss Him, or the delicate and beautiful youth earning His livelihood by the sweat of His brow at the carpenter's bench, or the man in the full development of His noble personality preaching His gospel of love, bravely mixing with all sorts of people, good and bad, friends and foes, healing the sick, doing good everywhere; or finally hanging naked on the cross, every bone protruding, His sacred lips parched by an intolerable thirst, whilst even His sacred soul is so absolutely desolate that He cannot but cry out to His heavenly Father: "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" (Matt. xxvii, 46). *Be-*

hold the Son of God *is* indeed *become as one of us!*

Oh! be Thou welcome among us, dear Son of the living God, Jesus, our brother, Thou the Word made flesh. May all men welcome Thee rapturously. May they all take Thee to their heart of hearts, and allow Thee to make them holy and happy. As for myself, after a long life of sin and tepidity and resistance to thy grace, behold at last I want to surrender myself completely to Thy masterful love, in the contemplation of the mysteries of Thy sacred humanity.

CHAPTER V

The Sacred Body of Our Lord

A BODY hast thou fitted to me. (Heb. x, 5.) These are the very first words of Our Lord, in coming into the world. So speaks to His Divine Father the Word made man: "O Father, a body hast Thou fitted to Me: what shall I do with it? To what uses shall I apply it?

"I will use it as a tool for the hard work of reparation that is due to Thy offended Majesty for the sins of the world, and for the building up of the edifice of My Church. I will make of it a high-pitched trumpet with which to proclaim loudly Thy Gospel of peace. I will turn it into a flag of brightest white and ruddy colours unfurled on high on the flag-pole of the cross, compelling all men to see it, soliciting all hearts to love it, *drawing all things to Myself;* a rallying sign to all men of good will. *Wheresoever the body shall be, there shall the eagles also be gathered together.* (Matt. xxiv, 28.)

"It will also be a musical instrument melodiously sounding forth Thy praises. It will be a spotless mirror of Thy sweetness and loveliness as well as of Thy Majesty. But above all it will be, in My hands, an oblation, a victim, a victim of sacrifice, of a sacrifice that is to be without end, without interruption during time or eternity: *juge sacrificium.* (Dan. viii, 11.)

O my soul, let us worship with the worship of adoration this Body of Christ, this flesh of our Jesus, this Victim which is no other than God Himself, no other than the Word made man. "*Ave, verum corpus.*—Hail, thou true human body that wast born of the Virgin Mary, that wast truly to suffer and be immolated on the cross for man's sake. I hail Thee in the womb on the day of Thy conception, I hail Thee on the straw of the stable of Bethlehem on the day of Thy nativity; I hail Thee growing and waxing strong and filled with grace and loveliness; I hail Thee on the Cross! I hail Thee in the Blessed Sacrament; I hail Thee on the Altar of heaven. *O Salutaris hostia!* with worship of adoration do I worship Thee!"

Is that all I have to do?

No indeed. Let us bear in mind that we, too, are the body of Christ, the very flesh and blood of our Jesus who has incorporated us with Himself, and made us His living members, evidently with a purpose. We seem to hear Him repeating: "*A body Thou hast fitted to Me.* O Father, Thou hast fitted to Me this mystical body, the flesh and blood and souls of My faithful, and what shall I do with it? To what uses shall I apply it? I will make of this mystical body, even as of Mine own personal body of flesh, a victim, a victim of sacrifice. Only, for this I require their consent and their co-operation."

Thou shalt have it, my Lord, at least, as far as I can speak for myself, counting upon the help of Thy grace. Yes, let me be with Thee an oblation, a victim of sacrifice to be smitten

with Thy divine chastisements: to be struck down and bled to death and skinned alive and pierced through and through, and cut into pieces and burned up and consumed—by the violence of illness and infirmities, by the enmities of men, by voluntary austerities; even as Thy martyrs, even as the saintly penitents, as all Thy dear saints, treading in the footsteps of the Queen of Martyrs, Thy sweet Mother, who suffered all these torments, not indeed in her own virgin flesh, but in Thine and in her own Mother's heart: and this proved a still more terrible experience. Yea, even as Thyself. With this last word, all is said: what more could be added?

But what a joy is this! What? Can I, even I, aspire to be and become in reality, thanks to my poor body of flesh, so misused and sin-stained, an oblation, a victim? Even so, if I join myself to the great victim, to Thee, my Jesus, and if I say also with Thee, taking for my own Thy very words: *Corpus aptasti mihi . . . ecce venio*: "O Father, a body hast Thou fitted to me; here I am." I know now for what purpose I have a body of flesh and to what uses I am expected to apply it: I must make of it *a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God* (Heb. xii, 1). This body of mine and with it the spirit that animates it, I must unite to the human Body and Soul of my Lord during all His life on earth and especially during His sorrowful Passion.

My dear Guardian Angel, does it not look as though I had the advantage of you, in this at least, that a body God has fitted to me?

CHAPTER VI

The Sacred Blood of Our Lord

IS there any lyrical production from the pen of men that can compare with this prophetic outburst of Isaias:

Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bosra, this beautiful one in his robe, walking in the greatness of his strength?

I that speak justice and am a defender to save.

Why, then, is thy apparel red, and thy garments like theirs that tread in the wine-press?

I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the Gentiles there is not a man with me. I have trampled on them in my indignation and have trodden them down in my wrath, and their blood is sprinkled upon my garments and I have stained all my apparel: for the day of vengeance is in my heart, the year of my redemption is come. I looked about and there was none to help: I sought and there was none to give aid; and my own arm hath saved for me and my indignation hath helped me. And I have trodden down the people in my wrath, and have made them drunk in my indignation, and have brought down their strength to the earth. (Isaias lxiii, 1-7.)

Looked at from the point of view of Jewish history, that is to say in its literal meaning, this page of Holy Writ is a vivid description of the

intervention of God in behalf of His chosen people and of the awful destruction He was soon to make of their enemies. Such is the literal, historical meaning; but looked at from the Christian point of view, that is to say, in its symbolical sense, this passage is all about the Sacred Blood of Our Lord and the part it has played in the work of our redemption.

Blood is liquid flesh, a stream of life that courses through the veins and arteries: it is the great builder and beautifier of the human body, the great feeder of its energies, the great restorer of its constantly decaying fabric. If a man loses some of his blood through a wound he grows faint in proportion; if he loses all his blood he dies.

A decree had gone forth from the infinite justice and wisdom of God that *without effusion of blood there could be no redemption.* (Heb. ix, 22.) That great truth was revealed to mankind from the very dawn of its history after the fall, and it explains the fact of bloody sacrifices in all religions: sacrifices, not only of all sorts of animals, but even sometimes of human creatures, of prisoners of war, of maidens, nay (horror of horrors!) of little children. This was a fearful mistake of the false religions, and yet it served to bring into evidence that universal belief of mankind that without effusion of blood there can be no remission of sin. The Jewish religion had many sacrifices of oxen and goats and lambs and doves, but even these had in themselves no efficacy. The blood of only one Person could serve, that of the true Lamb of God, and so He came to put an end to all former

sacrifices and shed His own blood on the altar of the cross.

We ought greatly to honour the diverse blood-sheddings of our dear Saviour.

Ah! He did not wait long after his birth to shed the first drops of it. Only eight days after, when he was circumcized. Let us shed tears with Mary and Joseph over the cruel tearing of the delicate flesh of the child-God. After that, for thirty-three years, we have only to admire the work of the sacred blood in the building up gradually of the body of the divine Victim.

Then come within the space of one night and one day the great sheddings of that sacred blood, in the Agony in the garden, the scourging, the crowning with thorns, the tearing open of all His wounds several times by the putting on and the taking away of His garments, by the crucifixion and finally, after His death, by the stroke of the centurion's lance.

The first of these blood-sheddings, that in the garden of Olives, ought particularly to retain our attention. The others are caused by the malice of men let loose upon the Lamb of God to inflict on him tortures which baffle imagination; but in the Agony, the blood-shedding is caused by Our Lord Himself allowing the whole weight of the sins of the world and at the same time the whole weight of the anger of his Divine Father to come upon Him and press down upon His heart and crush it as the grape under the wine-press.

Thus did Jesus pay the ransom of the world, and particularly the ransom of my soul, with all His blood. It seems He should rest satisfied

with this mighty deed of His love. No, that is not enough for Him: He must give us His flesh to eat and His blood to drink in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, daily and hourly celebrated all over the world. *This is my blood, drink ye all of it.* (Matt. xxvi, 27.) O dear Lord, we will.

I have noticed, with great joy, that many Protestants, Nonconformists as well as Anglicans, have a marked veneration for the Sacred Blood and sing hymns in its honour. With such parts of the Bible as they have preserved without interpolation, this much at least they have in common with us. Any particle of faith and love of our blessed Lord retained by them is to us a matter of sincere congratulation. But the great pity is that they only speak of the Divine Blood, they do not get it applied to their souls as we do in the seven sacraments, principally in the blessed Eucharist.

I have had the happiness of bringing some of them back to the true fold of Christ by this sole consideration. Only in the Catholic Church can they be sure that they *wash their garments in the blood of the Lamb.* (Apoc. vii, 14.) Only there can they really bathe their souls in it. Only there can they drink of the chalice of the new and eternal Covenant.

Oh, Christ Jesus, dear Redeemer, eternal thanks be to Thee for being so lavish in the gift of Thy most precious blood!

CHAPTER VII

The Sacred Heart of Our Lord

WHOSOEVER pays loving reverence to the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, pays also loving reverence to His most Sacred Heart. It does not matter whether he realizes this or not, or actually thinks of it or not.

This consideration is very sweet and comforting. It shows that the devotion to the Sacred Heart has been at least implicitly practised by the Church and all her children from the very beginning. Even heretics, when pious and in good faith, as is the case with a certain number of them, practise this devotion in spite of themselves and at the very time that they are condemning it in the Catholic Church.

Conversely, whosoever honours explicitly and with special worship the Sacred Heart of Jesus, certainly honours at the same time His whole divine person, both in His Godhead and in His humanity. It is in order to give due prominence to this doctrine that the Church does not permit the representation of the Sacred Heart separately from the whole body of the divine Saviour.

Our Lord wants us now to render express and explicit worship to His Sacred Heart, and has attached wonderful blessings to the practice. The better to enter into the spirit of it

let us try to unravel the fundamental idea of this devotion.

Seeing that we would not understand the infinitude of His divine love in itself, that it would hardly make an impression on us, that it would even frighten us away from Him, on account of the distance there is between His infinite majesty and our littleness, and still more on account of our sinfulness, God said: I will make Myself their very own brother by flesh and blood, I will take unto Myself a man's heart with which to love them; I will love them with human love; a human love that will have behind it the whole tremendous force of My divine love. *I will draw them with the cords of Adam, with the bands of love.* (Osee. xi, 4.) I, their God, will love them passionately, even to the breaking of My human heart, even unto death. Thus in all the mysteries of His incarnation and of His human life our Lord is pulling at our heart's strings, appealing to us and to each one of us as man to man, the brotherly love of His heart calling for the brotherly love of our own.

The cataract of Niagara, with its immense weight of waters pouring continually over its brink, has scooped out at its base an abyss of which it is impossible to gauge the immense depth. Infinitely more so is it with the floodgates of divine love poured out from the highest heaven of the Blessed Trinity into the human heart of our beloved Lord.

He Himself warns us in the Apocalypse to be on our guard against *the depths of Satan* (Apoc.

ii, 2, 4); depths of malice and perversity which, indeed, far exceed all we can imagine. But, O my Jesus, how much more immeasurable are the depths of loving tenderness of Thy Sacred Heart!

All the Scriptures of both Testaments endeavour to give us some idea of it and fail. The holy Gospels are the books that come nearest to achieve this. Next to them in this connection comes the Canticle of Canticles; but one must obtain permission of one's spiritual father before venturing to read it, and one must be sure to read it aright.

After the Scriptures and in the light of their revelation nothing can surpass the compelling virtue of the revelation of Our Lord to Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque.

That human heart of my Saviour loved me as soon as it was formed by the Holy Ghost in the mystery of the Incarnation. It loved me throughout all His earthly life and in every incident of His cruel passion. It loved me at the moment of His death. It loved me ever since His glorious resurrection during the centuries that intervened till my coming into the world. It has loved me throughout all the incidents of my sinful life, hating my sin but full of compassion for me the sinner. He loves me at this moment. He loves me as though I was the only one in existence; loves me for my own sake, not collectively with the others, but personally; not in a platonic way, but most tenderly. Oh! this love is ineffable!

Man shall come to a deep heart, and God shall be exalted. (Ps. lxiii, 7.) The deep heart

spoken of here is that of Our Lord. No sooner have we come to it than we become skilled in the praise of God, skilled in the sublimest contemplation. The poor sinner, the poor sinful woman, draw near to that heart: they have no sooner looked into it than they are seized with a sort of giddiness; they cast themselves body and soul into its abysmal depths, and instead of crushing themselves to death, they find therein life, health, joy, purity, security, confidence, love, love inexpressible.

I admire the boldness of expression of St. Paul proclaiming to his dear Corinthians the greatness of his apostolic love for them: *Our mouth is open to you, O ye Corinthians, our heart is enlarged. You are not straitened in us.* (2 Cor. vi, 11-12.) As though he would lodge them all within his heart. What with the Apostle was only an eloquent figure of speech, becomes a mystical reality as far as the Sacred Heart of Jesus is concerned in regard to all the just on earth and in purgatory and all the blessed ones in paradise, as well angels as men. The heart of Jesus is for them all a dwelling place, a paradise within a paradise, a garden of delights far more pleasant than that of our first parents.

This, then, is what ought to constitute our contemplation of the Sacred Heart. We ought to be incessantly trying to realize the depths of THE HUMAN LOVE OF OUR LORD. The depth of His human love for God the Father, for the Divine Word to whom it is united in the person,*

* Or *hypostatically united.* Both expressions are really hard for the average reader as they equally stand for the whole treatise *De Incarnatione Verbi.*

for the Holy Spirit who has filled it to overflowing with the fulness of His gifts. Then His human love so tender and so filial for His sweet virgin-mother Mary. Then His human love for the nine choirs of His blessed angels and all the different orders of His saints already in paradise, or still in purgatory or pilgrims on earth; also for poor sinners and finally, even for me, the worst of all.

Here is, indeed, a feast for contemplative souls, enough to satiate their keenest hunger and thirst. *Eat, O friends, and drink and be inebriated, my dearly beloved.* (Cant. of Cant. vi, 1.)

CHAPTER VIII

The Human Soul of Our Lord

SINCE Our Lord, the Son of the living God, has taken unto Himself a human soul like our own, since that human soul is the most noble that can ever be, being in itself absolutely the master-piece of creative Omnipotence and, moreover, united to the person of the Word of God and filled with the fulness of the Holy Spirit; since finally Our Lord has spoken to us of His soul: *My soul is sorrowful even unto death* (Matt. xxvi, 38), He said to His Apostles on entering the garden of Gethsemani: I want to contemplate this most holy human soul of the Son of God and my Saviour and keep my own soul constantly in touch with it.

In the contemplation of the creatures to which we are so naturally drawn, the sight of their exterior charms of body but too often prevents our penetrating to the very soul: the folds of the flesh hide from us the pure, immortal essence of the spirit that is within. The reverse of this ought to be the case in our loving contemplation of Our Lord. The mysteries of His sacred flesh are but a transparent veil, which attracts our eyes only to lead us beyond it and enable us to penetrate to that which it covers. The delicate and tender mysteries of the flesh of Jesus ought to serve to lift the mind

of the Christian out of the low region of the senses and place him suddenly face to face with the most marvellous created mirror of the Godhead, the human soul of the Son of God. In this mirror, the devout Christian will come gradually, and, of course, dimly, to discover with the eyes of faith, the Word of God and with Him and through Him the whole blessed Trinity. Thus is the contemplation of the soul of Our Lord the immediate preparation for the contemplation of the pure essence of the Godhead.

The soul of Jesus, then, is that human soul which found itself at the very first moment of its existence possessed and appropriated by the Divine Word, made one with Him in person, for all times and all eternity. It is the soul of that sacred body and blood which was to be the victim and ransom of the whole human race. It is the soul of the Lamb of God born of the Virgin Mary, the new Adam.

Therefore two marvellous things cling to that soul: on the one hand the second person of the Blessed Trinity whose own human soul it is, and on the other the flesh and blood of Our Lord of which it is the substantial form: hence it follows that during the pilgrim days of Jesus on earth, there were in His soul, by a beatific vision such as was never granted to the highest seraph in glory, reverberations of the infinite happiness of the Word of God, and at the same time echoes of all the labours and fatigues of His body, from His childhood to his last day, and of all the torments of His sacred flesh during His passion and death on the cross.

But there is even more, oh! much more than this. In the passion of our Saviour, besides what is particularly, so to say, the passion of His sacred flesh, such as the torment of His scourging at the pillar, the crowning with thorns, the nailing and hanging on the wood of the cross, there is also what we may describe as more particularly the passion of His sacred soul, that is: His agony in the garden, the treason of Judas, the thrice-repeated denial of Peter, the ignominious comparison Pilate made of Him with the assassin Barabbas, the rejection of Him by His people, their clamouring for His blood, their horrible blindness which made them cry out: *His blood be upon us and upon our children* (Matt. xxvii, 25); the cruel taunts and blasphemies of His enemies whilst He was in agony on the cross, the distress of His sweet Mother at the foot of the cross, the seeming dereliction of Himself by His Father at this climax of all His sufferings.

We must also understand that this passion of the soul of our beloved Lord took an amplitude and an intensity unimaginable, from the fact that the mind of Our Lord, with the divine knowledge that was communicated to it by His union in person with the Word of God, took in at a glance, but all distinctly and separately, the sins of the whole human race. Thus behind Judas the traitor, in the act of betraying Him with a kiss, the soul of Jesus saw the multitude of misers who would sell their soul and sell their God for the coveted gold, also the multitude of sacrilegious communicants stretching forth all along the centuries. Behind the

cowardly denial of Peter He saw and deplored all the sins that would be committed through human respect. Behind the despair of Judas and the evil death of the bad thief, He discerned the countless multitude of those who would not be saved, in spite of His love for them and His terrible passion; and He grieved over the eternal loss of each of them as no one else could, because no one knows as well as Jesus the price of an immortal soul.

Finally it is in the soul of Our Lord that the anger of His Father against the sins of the world with which Jesus had clad himself in order to atone for them all made itself felt. And this, joined to Jesus' own loathing for all these abominations, made His sorrows reach a sort of infinitude.

At the same time as it performs all the functions of a soul towards its body of flesh and all the intellectual and volitive operations that are proper to a rational and free agent, the human soul of Our Lord discharges another office, quite unique and unprecedented, that of building up to itself a second body, a mystical body composed of all men of good will united in his love.

This wonderful capacity of the soul of Our Lord, due to its personal union with the Word of God and consequent beatific vision and omniscience, gives us an explanation of how it came to pass that the object of its contemplation was so diversified even during the life of Our Lord on earth. Even from the first moment of his conception Jesus applied his soul, first to the contemplation of the divine essence and of the life *ad intra* of the three divine persons, even

as though he were already in heaven. Then He contemplated with ineffable delight the sanctity of His sweet Mother Mary and the operations of the Holy Ghost in her, as also in St. Joseph and in all those He came in contact with, such as the infant John the Baptist still in His mother's womb, and later His Apostles and disciples, the holy women who followed Him, the little children whom He caressed and blessed, the poor sinful creatures whom He converted. He was seeing in them the first elements of His Church that will be His spotless bride after the resurrection and general judgment. Who will describe to us the transports of love with which the human soul of Our Lord yearned after each one of us, knowing full well the struggles and temptations which awaited us, the occasional defeats we should experience and the final triumph with which his grace, as we firmly hope, would crown us? Even when still in His mother's womb and afterwards at every successive phase of His life, Jesus applied his human soul with its wonderful infused knowledge to the loving consideration of each one of us, calling each by His own baptismal name, and adding to it that new name which will be given us when we reach heaven.

O soul of my Saviour, I love thee, I adore thee; do thou sanctify me.

CHAPTER IX

The Mind of Jesus

IN Our Lord there are two natures, the divine and the human; and there are also two minds, as there are also two wills, the divine and the human. The divine mind or spirit of Our Lord is none other than his Holy Spirit of love, the Holy Ghost, which in union with the Father He breathes out eternally. Now, besides this Divine Spirit of our Lord, we are obliged to acknowledge in Him the presence of another spirit or mind, which is that of His sacred humanity, emanating from His human understanding and will, and from His experiences in His human life. It is of this mind of Our Lord that St. Paul speaks to the Philippians when he exhorts them and us in these words: *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.* (Philip. ii, 5.)

It might seem at a first glance that it should suffice to us to have the Holy Ghost; but on closer observation it will soon become evident that unless we have at the same time the spirit or mind of the sacred humanity of Our Lord, we could not get on satisfactorily in our spiritual life.

A few moments before the miraculous taking away of Elias in a fiery chariot, his disciple Eliseus addressed to him this petition: *I beseech thee that in me may be thy twofold spirit*

(2 Kings ii, 9), that is to say, the gift of prophecy and that of miracles. We do not ask of Our Lord for these *gratis datae* graces, but for something far more precious which He let fall as a mantle over the shoulders of His Church when He went up to heaven on the day of His glorious ascension: both His divine spirit and His human spirit.

The human spirit of Jesus is that special mentality of His, partly infused and partly acquired, of which Our Lord shows Himself to be in possession at the successive stages of His earthly life, and which perseveres in Him now in the glory of heaven and in His Blessed Sacrament.

I say that part of this mentality of Our Lord was infused in Him, whilst the rest of it was acquired by Him in the same way in which other men come by their own proper and personal mentality, namely by the accumulated experiences of their life. On coming into this world by His conception in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary, Jesus showed Himself, at that very first moment of His earthly life, in possession of a very definite mentality, since He utters these words: *Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not, but a body thou hast fitted to me; then said I: Behold I come. In the head of the book it is written of me that I should do thy will, O God.* (Heb. x, 5-7.) By what previous experience, by what logical sequence of ideas, by what process of deduction of His human mind, or previous deliberation of His will did Our Lord come to think and speak and will and act in His mother's bosom? By none of these antecedent processes, since He had only just then

come into existence. So we are compelled to acknowledge in Our Lord, even at that moment, the possession of an infused mentality, in virtue of which He is able to think, speak and act before any experience has brought Him its contribution. We shall be less surprised to find this to have been the case with the second Adam, when we see that it was the case even with the first. Quite miraculously, without any previously acquired knowledge, but by infused wisdom, the ancestor of the human race, fresh from the creative hands of God, showed himself in possession of a language so perfect that he could call each beast, as it passed before him, by a name which expressed the characteristics of its very nature. And when Eve is brought to him after his mysterious sleep, he begins to show a prophetic knowledge of the future, saying: *This, now, is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. . . . Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother, and cleave to his wife.* (Gen. ii, 23-24.)

On the other hand, the same St. Paul speaks also plainly of that part of the mentality of Our Lord which was acquired by Him. He says that: *Whereas, indeed, he was the Son of God, he learned obedience by the things which he suffered.* (Heb. v, 8.) Most assuredly the mentality of Our Lord, born of His own various personal experiences, had its growth, was gradually modified, was much enriched, day by day, year by year. The Gospel clearly states the fact: *Jesus advanced in wisdom and age, and grace with God and men.* (Luke ii, 52.) So there cannot be the least doubt that the

human mentality of Our Lord under its experimental aspect was found to be very different, of a difference of superiority and richness at the moment of His death on the cross, in comparison with what it was at the moment of His coming into the world.

Now, for the Christian to have the mind of Christ, is to appropriate to himself the human mentality of Our Lord both infused and acquired; to think, to speak, to act interiorly and exteriorly even as Christ was wont to do whilst on earth, even as He would do at this hour were He in our place. What would my Jesus think of this? What would He say under such circumstances? How would He act at this particular juncture? Usually a moment's prayerful consideration will suffice to enlighten a soul of good will upon these points; especially when, through constant perusal and meditation, one has become familiar with the text of the four Gospels.

Thus to be able to discern what Jesus would say or do, were He in our place, is assuredly a great advantage already; still, this would not be a proof as yet that the mind of Christ Jesus is in us. Something more is needed. Not only must we perceive what Jesus would do, but we must bend ourselves to do it. We must not only recall to mind what He did or said under similar circumstances, but we must make His feelings and discourses our very own; we must force ourselves to say what He would say and in the manner He would say it, with that blending of sweetness, moderation and firmness which He always exhibited.

How many Christians shall we find who have

risen to such perfection and maintain themselves in it? Very few. Mystics alone do so. Others have not in themselves the mind of Christ Jesus, the human mentality of Our Lord, the grace to see and to will in perfect harmony with the divine Master. There are ever so many Christians, even of those who live habitually in the state of grace, and who therefore have in them the Holy Ghost, who yet have not at the same time the human mind of Our Lord, since they are not guided in their thoughts and speech and actions by the standard of the Gospel of Jesus, but by self-love, human respect or the maxims of the world. Does not this show that indeed we must have the twofold spirit of Jesus Christ if we wish our spiritual life to proceed satisfactorily? We receive His divine Spirit, the Holy Ghost, through the efficacy of the sacraments, and with their help we must moreover acquire by divine contemplation and by our practice of all virtues His human mentality and make it our own.

Says the author of THE IMITATION:

"Let our great occupation be to meditate on the life of Christ.

"The teaching of Christ surpasses all the teachings of the Saints, and whosoever would take it to heart would find therein a hidden manna.

"It happens that many persons derive but little profit from the frequent hearing of the Gospel because they have not the spirit of Christ.

"But whosoever wishes fully and feelingly to understand the words of Christ, must endeavour to make his whole life conformable to His." (Book I, ch. i.)

CHAPTER X

The Mystery of the Incarnation Illustrated by a Homely Comparison

IT is St. Ildephonsus, Bishop of Toledo in the seventh century, in his forty-third sermon, *In diem natalem sanctae Mariae,* who seems to be the first to have brought forward in a few words the comparison of a sunbeam passing through a pane of glass, in order to give to his hearers an inkling of the wonders of the Incarnation. The same comparison occurs now and again with further developments in subsequent ecclesiastical writers. I will give it as it now presents itself to my mind.

The sunbeam proceeds from the sun in a way which we are unable to observe, because the splendour of the sun dazzles our eyes. In like manner the generation of the divine Word in the effulgence of the Godhead, in the splendours of the ineffable sanctities of the Father, is impenetrable to us. Whence Isaias exclaims: *Who shall declare his generation?* (Is. liii, 8.)

The sunbeam is as old as the sun which produces it, for the sun is never without its own resplendence. So likewise is the Son of God in regard to His divine Father: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.* (John i, 1-2.) *The Lord*

hath said to me: Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. (Ps. ii, 7.)

The sun pours out upon all things light and warmth, and fruitfulness and beauty by means of its rays of light. The Father in heaven pours out all His gifts upon the world through His own divine Son who is *the life* as St. John declares (John i, 4) and as He Himself proclaims: *I am the life* (John xiv, 16); and *the light of the world* (John viii, 12); *the true light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world* (John i, 9)—*All things were made by him, and without him was made nothing that was made.* (John i, 3.)

The sun in the high heaven produces its beam of light without any deterioration of itself; indeed so far from this being the case the sunbeam is the very glory and perfection of the sun. Likewise the Son of God is one and the same God with his Father and, therefore, is no cause of loss to Him, but on the contrary He is the splendour of the Father, *the brightness of eternal light* (Wisd. vii, 26); *the brightness of his glory.* (Heb. i, 3.)

Although the sunbeam extends itself through space, reaching down even to our earth, it remains united to the parent sun, never leaving it for a single instant. So also the Son of God proceeding from the Father and by Him sent upon our earth, nevertheless remains in Him, *the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father.* (John i, 18.) Hence He Himself proclaims: *I and the Father are one.* (John x, 30.)

The light of the sun passes through a pane of glass without breaking it either at its entrance or at its egress. Thus Christ our Lord, the Son of

the living God, entered the bosom of the blessed Virgin Mary and came forth from it without breaking the seal of her virginal integrity. *Behold a* VIRGIN *shall conceive and bear a son* (Is. vii, 14). And Mary said to the Angel: *How shall this be done,* BECAUSE I KNOW NOT MAN? (Luke i, 34.) *Now the generation of Christ was in this wise: when as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was* FOUND WITH CHILD, OF THE HOLY GHOST. (Matt. i, 18.)

The sunbeam passing through a pane of glass causes it to shine with great brightness. Thus also Jesus in regard to the ever Blessed Virgin Mary. Says St. John in the Apocalypse: *A great sign appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun.* (Apoc. xii, 1.)—*The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the most High shall overshadow thee.* (Luke i, 35.)—*Elizabeth cried with a loud voice and said: Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.* (Luke i, 42.)—*And it came to pass as he spoke these things, a certain woman from the crowd lifting up her voice said to him: Blessed is the womb that bore thee, and the paps that gave thee suck.* (Luke xi, 27.)

The sunbeam passing through stained glass takes upon itself the colouring of the glass. The Son of God passing through the blessed Virgin Mary took unto Himself our human nature: hence He loved to call Himself emphatically *The Son of Man* (*passim* in the Gospels and the Apocalypse). The bride in the Canticle of Canticles exclaims: *Who shall grant me, O my brother, sucking the breast of my mother, that I*

may find thee without and kiss thee? (Cant. viii, 1.) *I, Jesus, am the root and stock of David, the bright and morning star. And the spirit and the bride say: Come. And he that thirsteth, let him come, and he that will, let him take the waters of life, freely.* (Apoc. xxii, 16-17.)

The sunbeam, before it became coloured in its passage through the stained glass, was indeed a sunbeam, but was not coloured; but once it has assumed its colour, it remains indeed what it was till then, namely a ray of light, and it becomes at the same time a coloured one. Thus before His Incarnation, the Son of God was God indeed, but not man, but since the Incarnation He is for ever at the same time both God and man. *His name shall be called Emmanuel* (Is. vii, 14) —*which being interpreted is God with us.* (Matt. i, 23.)—*And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as it were of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.* (John i, 14.)—*I am the first and the last, and alive and was dead, and behold I am living for ever and ever.* (Apoc. i, 17-18.)

What upholds the colour in the ray of light is the sunbeam itself. In the same way in Christ what upholds His human nature is the person of the Divine Word. *Amen, amen I say to you,* BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS MADE, I AM. (John viii, 58.) I AM WHO AM. (Exod. iii, 14.)

The light from the sun diffuses itself all over the world, but as coloured it is only in the place where it passes through the pane of glass. Similarly Christ as God is everywhere: *Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy face? If I ascend into heaven, thou art*

there; if I descend into hell, thou art present. If I take my wings early in the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. (Ps. cxxxviii, 7-10.) But as man Our Lord is only in heaven and in the Blessed Sacrament. *The Lord said to my Lord: Sit thou at my right hand.* (Ps. cix, 1.)—*And whilst they were at supper, Jesus took bread and blessed and broke, and gave to his disciples and said: Take ye and eat,* THIS IS MY BODY. *And taking the chalice he gave thanks, and gave to them, saying: Drink ye all of this, for* THIS IS MY BLOOD. (Matt. xxvi, 26-28.)

The father of the sunbeam is none other than the sun itself, although the beam does not derive its colour from the sun; its mother, so to say, is the pane of glass, because although it does not produce the sunbeam as such, it nevertheless produces it coloured. In the same way the Son of God purely as such, is produced by the Eternal Father alone: *From the womb, before the day-star I begot thee* (Ps. cix, 3), but as God made man He is produced by the blessed Virgin Mary. *And it came to pass that when they were there, her days were accomplished that she should be delivered, and she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him up in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.* (Luke ii, 6-7.)

The sunbeam purely as such is older than the stained glass; as coloured it is younger. So also our Lord in regard to His virgin-mother: as God he is older than her, as man and her son he is younger, as is obvious.

The ray of light, purely as such, cannot be seen in the sun whence it proceeds, because there the fierce intensity of its blaze would put out our eyes; but when it presents itself to view as coloured through the stained glass, far from doing our eyes any harm, it gives them pleasure. In the same way Christ as God is absolutely invisible and ineffable to his reasonable creature on earth: *If he come to me I shall not see him, if he depart I shall not understand.* (Job ix, 11.)—*Peradventure thou wilt comprehend the steps of God and wilt find out the Almighty perfectly? He is higher than heaven and what wilt thou do? He is deeper than hell and how wilt thou know?* (Job xi, 7.)—WHO SHALL BE ABLE TO BEHOLD THE THUNDER OF HIS GREATNESS? (Job xxvi, 14.) But as God made man He is exceedingly sweet to contemplate, compelling our love: *Beautiful above the sons of men: grace is poured abroad in thy lips. . . . With thy comeliness and thy beauty, set out, proceed prosperously and reign. . . . Thou hast loved justice and hated iniquity, therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. Myrrh and stacte and cassia perfume thy garments from the ivory houses.* (Ps. xliv, 3-9.) The garments from the ivory houses are none other than the immaculate flesh Our Lord took from the bosom of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

In this connection I know of nothing more wonderful than the fifth chapter of the Canticle of Canticles. Therein the mystic bride sets forth, in the most direct and realistic language, the loveliness of Our Lord on the Cross, where He makes a sort of ostentation of his Sacred Humanity.

Let me quote these entrancing verses, giving a brief paraphrase at the same time.

In the beginning of this chapter the mystic bride, that is to say, the soul of the fervent Christian in love with our Lord Jesus Christ, relates some of her less pleasing spiritual experiences. Jesus, the beloved had presented Himself to her, knocking at the door of her heart by strong impressions of interior sweetness, and calling for a response on her part. She made the mistake of putting Him off for a little while under slight excuses, and He went away, that is to say, she ceased to have these sweet feelings of devotion. Whereupon she began to stir herself to recover them. She went first to her spiritual director, who apparently gave her a good scolding; then she addressed herself to someone else in authority who made matters worse by some rough handling of her case. At last in her distress she turned to the dear saints in heaven and earnestly prayed to them for help in this trouble. The saints and angels are touched with compassion at her plight and, in order to soothe her sorrow, they make her speak of her beloved and ask from her a description of him. Here, now, is her answer:

My beloved is white and ruddy, white with the splendour of His infinite sanctity, ruddy with the torrents of His blood shed in His sacred passion. *Chosen out of thousands,* nay, out of all the million millions of angels and men, and preferred to them all.

His head is as the finest gold. The head of Jesus, according to St. Paul, is his divine nature (1 Cor. xi, 3); finest gold indeed, since there is nothing so precious as the divine essence. As

for the head of His body of flesh, can anything in the whole range of creation be found finer than it, with every feature of its face illumined and resplendent with the most ardent charity? *His locks are as branches of palm trees, black as ravens;* that is to say His divine thoughts are deep and impenetrable, therefore dark to us; every hair of His sacred head is to each of His elect a token of victory even as the palms of the martyrs and of the confessors already in heaven.

His eyes as doves upon brooks of waters, which are washed with milk and sit beside the plentiful streams. The eyes are the mirrors of the soul: therefore what ineffable purity and compassion and tenderness, and all other virtues, must the eyes of Jesus have reflected in life, and do now still more in glory.

His cheeks are as beds of aromatical spices set by the perfumers. The blood trickling down from the cruel perforations of the crown of thorns on His brow made patterns and divisions on His cheeks, and the most delicate perfumes are not to be compared with the virtue that emanated from this tracery of His sacred blood.

His lips are as lilies dropping choice myrrh. What dropped from the lips of our Lord were words of the most earnest supplication for sinners. No sooner was He raised aloft on this terrible and atrocious instrument of torture, the cross, than His first prayer was for His tormentors. *Father, forgive them,* He said, *they know not what they do.* (Luke xxiii, 34.)

His hands are *turned* and as *of gold, full of hyacinths.* We cannot doubt but that the hands of our Lord were the most marvellously beauti-

ful and perfect, and after Him those of His sweet virgin-mother. They are as gold on account of the many good deeds and miracles of mercy they have performed. They are full of hyacinths by reason of the clotted purple blood which fills the wounds of Our Lord on the cross, one single drop of which would pay the ransom of thousands of worlds even more guilty than ours.

His belly as of ivory, set with sapphires. The first *Adam and Eve were both naked and were not ashamed.* (Gen. ii, 25.) How much less need the new Adam, the immaculate Lamb of God, be ashamed of His nakedness on the cross? The sapphires are the wounds made by the scourging; for His tormentors spared no part of His sacred body, so that it could be said, in the words of the prophet: *From the sole of the foot unto the top of the head, there is no soundness in him.* (Is. i, 6.) But the slightest of these wounds is more precious than all the precious stones of the world.

His legs are as pillars of marble that are set upon bases of gold. Bases of gold are the two feet of Our Blessed Lord, nailed to the cross, enduring the horrible torment of supporting upon their wounds the whole weight of His sacred body. His legs are as pillars of most rare and precious marble, since they support the body of Our Lord, which is the most perfect temple of the Divine Majesty.

His form as Libanus, excellent as the cedars, that is to say, of matchless nobility and majesty, during His whole earthly life, and particularly during His sacred passion, and now in glory.

His throat most sweet: that is to say His

words and discourses are full of amenity and love. His seven words on the cross are a most admirable conclusion and compendium of all His teaching; especially these words to Mary and John: *Behold thy son, behold thy mother.* (John xix, 26-27).

And he is all lovely: lovely in His Godhead, lovely in His sacred humanity; lovely in His most holy soul, lovely in His immaculate flesh and blood and sacred heart.

Indeed, therefore, must we conclude, our Emmanuel, God made man "of the most pure blood of the Virgin Mary" *ex purissimis sanguinibus* as St. Thomas expresses it, is exceedingly sweet to contemplate and compels our love. He has taken all this loveliness with His own sacred humanity, from the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Thus in the mystery of the Incarnation, Mary is the crystal door or window of paradise, through which that sunbeam, the Divine Word, came from the bosom of the Eternal Father even unto our lowliness. To Him be love and praise and rapturous thanksgiving throughout all times and all eternity!

CHAPTER XI

The Orthodox Literature Concerning Our Lord Jesus Christ

CONSIDERABLE, and under certain aspects, interesting and instructive is the unorthodox literature about Our Lord Jesus Christ. I mean all those works touching our Blessed Lord, which have strayed to a greater or lesser extent from the data of divine revelation, and in consequence have been condemned by the Church.

Beginning with the gnostic heresies and the apocryphal gospels, this literature extends through all the centuries of the Christian era to our own times, and bids fair to stretch away to the end of the world. Such works are rank poison, absolutely unfit for feeding the souls of men; that is why the Church finds herself in duty bound to forbid their reading generally. However, they have had this one good effect of forcing the Church carefully to discuss every point of the doctrine concerning Our Lord, and thereby to become conscious of the treasures of light and comfort contained in it; and finally to set this doctrine in clean-cut formulas and definitions which render final the conclusions arrived at in Ecumenical Councils as well as in the ex-cathedra decisions of the Popes. In these pages we have nothing to do with this unorthodox literature about Jesus.

As for the orthodox literature, it is obviously out of the question to point out all the good books that have been written about Our Lord Jesus Christ, during these well-nigh two thousand years. Merely to record the names of the books and of their writers would be the task of a Hercules and fill enormous folios. My aim in this chapter is much more modest. It is simply to give a list of some of the books I have read and found serviceable. I do not pretend that they are all the very best that could be found, and that those I have not entered in this list are to be considered as being of an inferior quality. No, I can only assure my readers that these are very good, fairly representative, and that any of them may be of great help. I have been obliged to keep this list within reasonable limits.

The order I follow is this: beginning with contemporary books on Our Lord, I work my way up through the centuries to the very first, where we reach at last the bedrock foundation of the four Gospels and the rest of the Scriptures.

I could not use the word "Christology" in this connection, because it is too learned a word for many of my readers, and also because the words at the head of this chapter allow of a larger scope in the choice of books to be recommended.

THE TRAMP, by A. Young, a wonderful penny pamphlet of the Catholic Truth Society, containing a study of Our Lord at the age of three, so finely thought out, and so exquisitely drawn that it makes one heartily wish the author

would draw up similar studies of Our Lord at different times of His life on earth.

LE RAYON, by Reynès-Monlaur, a French book larger than the preceding one, giving an impression of what must have been the winsomeness of Our Lord during His three years of public life.

BEN-HUR.—The famous work of the American Lew Wallace, gives a striking interpretation of the data of the Gospel from the birth of Our Lord to His death, interwoven in a very dramatic story of human sorrow, love and frailty.

The above three compositions are, each in its own way, fairly representative of a very large class of works on Jesus which has developed in the last half of a century. They belong to the realm of imaginative creations and yet approach the subject of Our Lord with profound reverence and some happy effects. The works which follow are of quite a different character, as their titles will show.

Abbot Vonier: THE PERSONALITY OF CHRIST, THE CHRISTIAN MIND, THE DIVINE MOTHERHOOD.

✠A. Goodier, S.J., Archbishop of Bombay: A MORE EXCELLENT WAY. Only a small pamphlet of thirty odd pages, but worth ten times its weight in gold. Price threepence, at the Manresa Press.

Rev. P. M. Northcote: GOD MADE MAN.

THE LIFE OF JESUS by different authors such as Le Camus, Didon, Veuillot, Fouard, Sister Aimée de Jésus O.C. (this last, a really marvellous production; 3 vols.)

Father Coleridge S.J. (thirty odd volumes).

Father Meschler, S.J.: MEDITATIONS ON THE LIFE OF OUR LORD.
Abbot Marmion: CHRIST, THE LIFE OF THE SOUL, CHRIST IN HIS MYSTERIES.
Mgr. Benson: FRIENDSHIP OF JESUS.
Francis Thompson: THE HOUND OF HEAVEN, ORIENT ODE.
Mgr. Sauvé: JÉSUS INTIME.
Pope Leo XIII's ENCYCLICALS: *Annum sacrum* (May 25th, 1899), on the consecration of the human race to the Sacred Heart. *Tametsi futura prospicientibus* (November 1st, 1900), on Jesus the Redeemer, *Mirae caritatis* (May 28th, 1902), on the Holy Eucharist.
Lacordaire: CONFERENCES of the year 1846.
Duquesne: L'EVANGILE MÉDITÉ.
Cardinal Franzelin: DE VERBO INCARNATO.
J. S. Arnold: L'IMITATION DU SACRÉ COEUR DE JÉSUS.
St. Alphonsus Liguori: PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST, and various other most devout opuscules on Our Lord's Life and Passion and the Holy Eucharist.
Olier: CATÉCHISME CHRÉTIEN POUR LA VIE INTERIEURE.
Bossuet: SUNDAY SERMONS—ELEVATIONS ON THE MYSTERIES—MEDITATIONS ON THE GOSPELS.
Pascal: PENSÉES, LE MYSTÈRE DE JÉSUS.
Marie d'Agréda: LA CITÉ DE DIEU.
Catechismus Concilii Tridentini. Pars I art. II s. ad vii inclus.
St. Ignatius: SPIRITUAL EXERCISES, 2nd, 3rd and 4th week.

THE FOLLOWING OF CHRIST. Book 1, ch. i. Book II, chs. vi to xii. Books 3rd and 4th in full.

St. John of the Cross: THE LIVING FLAME OF LOVE.

THE LIFE OF CHRIST, by Ludolph of Saxony.

Dante's DIVINA COMMEDIA. Part 3, cant. 14, 23 and 33.

St. Bonaventure: MEDITATIONS ON THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

St. Thomas Aquinas: SUMMA AD GENTILES. LIBER *iv.*—SUMMA THEOLOGICA. Part iii, quaestio xxvii-lxii.—Opusculum liv, DE HUMANITATE CHRISTI DOMINI NOSTRI.—CATENA AUREA.

Petrus Lombardus: SENTENTIARUM LIBER TERTIUS.

Richardus a St. Victore: DE INCARNATIONE. DE EMMANUELE.

St. Bernard: SERMONS ON THE CANTICLE OF CANTICLES, done into English by a monk of Mount Melleray in Ireland.

St. Anselmus Cantuariensis: CUR DEUS HOMO.

St. Joannes Damascenus: DE DUABUS IN CHRISTO VOLUNTATIBUS.

Ven. Beda: DE MEDITATIONE PASSIONIS CHRISTI PER 7 HORAS.

St. Gregorius Magnus: EXPOSITIO IN CANTICA CANTICORUM.

St. Leo Magnus: SERMONES DE MYSTERIIS DOMINI.

St. Augustinus: DE CIVITATE DEI. DE SERMONE CHRISTI IN MONTE. TRACTATUS 124

IN JOANNIS EVANGELIUM. SERMONES. ENARRATIONES IN PSALMOS.

St. Cyrillus Alexandrinus: QUOD UNUS SIT CHRISTUS.—SCHOLIA DE INCARNATIONE UNIGENITI VERBI DEI.—LIBER DE INCARNATIONE.—ADVERSUS EOS QUI B. VIRGINEM NOLEBANT DEIPARAM.

St. John Chrysostom: HOMILIES ON ST. MATTHEW, ON ST. JOHN, ON THE EPISTLES OF ST. PAUL, DEMONSTRATION AGAINST JEWS AND GENTILES THAT CHRIST IS GOD.

St. Basilius Caesariensis: HOMILIA IN SANCTAM CHRISTI GENERATIONEM.

St. Ephrem: Sermones 13 DE NATIVITATE DOMINI.

St. Hilarius Pictaviensis: DE FILII ET PATRIS UNITATE.—DE ESSENTIA PATRIS ET FILII.

St. Hyppolitus Episcopus: DEMONSTRATIO DE CHRISTO ET ANTICHRISTO.

Clemens Alexandrinus: LIBRI 3 PAEDAGOGI.

St. Irenaeus: DETECTIO ET EVERSIO FALSI COGNOMINATAE COGNITIONIS.

St. Ignatius M. Ep. Antiochensis: SEPTEM EPISTOLAE.

Many ACTA MARTYRUM.

Iconography of the Catacombs.

THE BOOK OF SAINTS, being a Dictionary of Servants of God, etc., by the Benedictine Monks of St. Augustine's Abbey, Ramsgate.

J. Huby. S.J.: CHRISTUS. Manuel d' Histoire des Religions.

Dimmler: DAS NEUE TESTAMENT ERKLÄRT.

CHAPTER XII

How to use the Scriptures for the Affective Contemplation of Our Lord

"TO ignore the Scriptures is to ignore Christ," says St. Jerome. That is as much as saying: If you want to know Our Lord you must read the Scriptures, both Testaments, prayerfully and lovingly. *Search the Scriptures,* says Our Lord to the Jews, . . . *They give testimony of me.* (John v, 39.)

It is true that recently a blasphemous publicist, at a loss what to do to keep himself in the limelight of public notoriety, has found nothing better than to swell his voice and puff his cheeks to the point of bursting, and proclaim that the old Bible is out of date. According to him the Christian Bible can no more keep pace with the advance of humanity, and, in consequence, it is time for thoughtful men to put their heads together and proceed to make a fresh Bible in full accord with the sublimer aspirations of the world.

Now let me ask him: Who will be the historical personage around whom this new Bible will revolve? Will he come after having been predicted, prefigured, ardently called for and yearned after by all the nations of the earth as has been the case with Our Lord Jesus Christ? What message better than the two commandments of love and the eight beatitudes will he bring to the world? And will this man seal his new message with his

own blood and allow himself to be crucified? And, once dead, will he raise himself from the dead? For, when all has been said, we must come back to the fundamental fact that the Bible is not, like any other book, a dead thing, but living. Our Lord Jesus Christ is not only the hero of the Bible: *He is the Bible.* His enemies know this quite well, and when they wish to suppress the Christian Bible by any means their ingenuity can devise, it is not so much the book they want to put out of the way as Our Lord Himself.

What will be the fate of such a preposterous, sacrilegious attempt?

He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh at them, and the Lord shall deride them. (Ps. ii, 4.)

Of this no more need be said.

In our search after a deeper revelation of Jesus and an increased affective knowledge of Him by means of the Scriptures, we may follow this order:

Seek Him first in the four GOSPELS OF SS. MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE AND JOHN. They give us the authentic historical Christ. There He lives under our eyes, He speaks in our hearing, He lives His magnificently simple life till the age of thirty, and suddenly bursts forth into the great prophet and miracle-worker and evident Messiah. There we see Him at last die on the cross, rise from His tomb on the third day and soon after ascend into heaven.

This is the first and fundamental and necessary presentment of Our Lord: the historical one, without which all the others would be absolutely

worthless. We must insist upon this great truth, as nowadays some people are quite content to make to themselves an imaginary Christ whom they can proclaim either divine or purely human as suits their convenience, but a Christ whom no one need take seriously, a Christ that does not demand the allegiance of mind and heart, nor impose any moral obligation.

From the four historical Gospels it will be good, then, to pass to what we may call the anticipated Gospels of THE PSALMS and THE PROPHETS, particularly ISAIAS and JEREMIAS. It will do us good to see every feature of our dear historical Saviour, every circumstance of His incarnation, birth, life, passion and death and after-life minutely predicted and His sweet praise sung in passionate accents, which we shall make our own, and love to repeat with all the Church.

When our spiritual education is sufficiently advanced, we shall, with due approval of those in authority over us, take up what I call the *Evangelium cordis*, that is to say, the CANTICLE OF CANTICLES, using, as is the will of God, with heart disengaged of all earthly affections, this dramatic presentation of human love, to raise ourselves to the spiritual love that ought to unite our soul to her heavenly Bridegroom. It is to be noted, however, that one may read rightly and enjoy spiritually the Canticle of Canticles, and be still full of imperfections, whilst many souls who have never read and will never read it, realize, in their intercourse with the Beloved, all that is therein set down by the inspired writer.

Then there is THE APOCALYPSE, which we may call the Gospel of Jesus in glory. Reading it with a great spirit of faith and love, do not bother about the obscure passages of prophetic announcement of events, which it would do you no good whatever to understand clearly; but lay particular stress on those whose meaning is quite clear, such as, for instance, the first and the last chapters. They will lift you up to heaven, and perfume your soul with their unearthly fragrance.

There is also the Gospel of Jesus living in His Church on earth, and in each wayfaring soul of goodwill, as adumbrated in the ACTS OF THE APOSTLES and the CANONICAL EPISTLES.

Finally, there is what I would call the LYRICAL GOSPEL, made out of all the pages in the EPISTLES OF ST. PAUL, which refer to Our Lord. St. Paul is essentially lyrical. He cannot take up his pen in order to treat of the most obscure points of the Judaic law or of the most trivial incidents in the lives of the first Christians without being drawn far beyond his original intent and suddenly soaring to immeasurable heights. Horace warns us in his ode, *Pindarum quisquis studet aemulari*, not to attempt the impossible: what shall we say, then, of the inimitable boldness of the flight of the great Apostle of the Gentiles into the realm of the supernatural? His mind is lyrical, his phrases are lyrical, his expressions are lyrical, his action is lyrical, his whole person, of so mean an outward appearance, from his own account (see 2 Cor. x, 10), is lyrical. Everything in him is vibrating, and it is the love of Jesus which makes it vibrate.

Whilst the four Evangelists are writing the

epic of the life of Our Lord in the grand and simple manner of Herodotus and Thucydides, leaving these at an infinite distance behind them, Saint Paul proceeds by springs and bounds, sudden and unexpected, which of course make it rather difficult to follow him: but whosoever takes the trouble to do so, very soon finds himself richly paid for his labour.

In the other books of the Bible it is seldom, and only casually, that any of their writers' personality transpires through their composition; here, on the contrary, it is the very personality of Paul which stamps each separate page, each sentence, one might almost say each word, with its own characteristics, and gives them their life and colouring.

In these marvellous epistles we discover two distinct revelations at one and the same time: first of all, a very special revelation of Our Lord, and then also a striking revelation of the apostolic soul of St. Paul. The two revelations cling to each other, compenetrate each other and together form a literary monument quite unique of its kind: something very human and very divine at the same time, something extremely sweet and invigorating and startlingly personal.

The Holy Ghost and Our Lord make of this man, Paul of Tarsus, this former Pharisee so dramatically converted on the road of Damascus, not only their amanuensis, or their herald sent to us with a message: they make him their message itself. Paul's life is what he preaches, and he preaches what is the very life of his life. *I live now, not I*, he is able to say, *but Christ liveth in me.* (Gal. ii, 20.)

In very deed, by the hand of St. Paul, Our Lord takes the trouble of explaining Himself, to make us understand the immense import of His own divine person, His doctrine, His acts. Better even than in the historical Gospel, Jesus herein tells us to what extent He is all that matters in the eyes of God the Father; to what degree He is verily all in all things and in all persons, and how truly we are in Him, one with Him and He is in us. We might perhaps call this presentation of Our Lord in the Epistles of St. Paul, the dogmatic Christ, as distinct from the historical Christ. It is Our Lord from life, but analysed, dissected, to make us touch as with our fingers by how many ties we are indissolubly united to Him.

I know of no writer, ancient or modern, who has done full justice to St. Paul. As far as I am aware, no one as yet has succeeded in giving a full, connected, harmonious and lucid account of the mind of St. Paul; of his intellectual vision, of the message he has brought to the world, of the revelation of Himself that Jesus has favoured him with. I suppose we must be satisfied with glimpses of this, and even so the contemplative will find his piecemeal study of Christ in St. Paul a source of infinite delights.

Before closing this chapter on the study of Our Lord in the Bible, I would give this advice. Let him who only seeks to feed his own personal piety and increase his love of Jesus Christ, avoid reading works of textual criticism, even of the orthodox kind. I know of nothing more calculated to dry up the soul. It is as a wind which has swept over the desert of Lybia and lost every

particle of moisture. We had better leave critical studies of the sacred text to those who have specialized in this branch of sacred study, whose special vocation it is, and who receive from God a special charisma for the purpose, and can speak *tanquam auctoritatem habentes* on those difficult matters. We can do no better than simply accept, at least provisionally, their conclusions, when they do not clash with those of the Biblical Commission instituted by the Holy See. Thereby we shall save our time and energies for the more congenial and profitable task of the loving contemplation of Our Lord.

END OF PART I.

PART II

THE AMAZING HUMAN LIFE OF CHRIST JESUS ON EARTH

THE AMAZING LIFE

CHAPTER XIII

The Manner of this Contemplation

THE foregoing chapters in Part I ought to have enabled us now, when meditating on the life of Our Blessed Lord, to take in the whole of Him, so to say, in any one of His mysteries; to take notice at the same time of His sacred body, His blood, His heart, His soul, of the workings of His human mind and His divine personality as the Word of the Father, true God and true Man—at whatever age of His earthly life we are actually contemplating Him. We shall see, later on, that even all this is not as yet the whole Christ, the "Christus totus" as St. Augustine speaks of Him in several passages of his works; it will, nevertheless, suffice us for the present purpose of contemplating Him in the mysteries of His life on earth.

How are we to proceed in this contemplation?

Let us note first that we shall not conceive a just and true idea of Our Lord and of our necessary relation to Him, if we consider Him separately from us and look upon ourselves as isolated from Him. We are one with Him and He is one with us, in His human nature, even irrespective of the fact that we are Christians. Then, as Christians, we are one with Him as the several members of the mystical body of which He is the head, as the branches are one with the vine.

He extends His divine life into each one of us and makes him *partaker of the divine nature* (2 Pet. i, 4); a true extension of Himself; *I am the vine, you the branches* (John xv, 5). Can the branch be separated from the vine? To do so would be to kill it. On the other hand to consider the vine as though it had no branches would be to do it an injustice, for the branches are part of it, they bear its fruits, besides being nourished by its sap.

From this principle it follows clearly enough that, whosoever wishes to derive from the contemplation of the life of Jesus on earth all the fruits Our Lord wants him to, must approach the subject with his whole self, body and soul, heart and mind, and not fail to bring to bear upon it all his own personal experiences of life. Nothing will bring home to him more vividly the incidents of the life of his Saviour. Moreover he must in spirit make himself the contemporary and the witness of the life of Jesus, absolutely as though it were actually being enacted under his eyes: and this he must do to such an extent as even to mix in the crowd, to follow Jesus step by step, to speak to Him, and to enter into His feelings and act a part in the drama.

Thus you will really enter into the life of Jesus and cause Him to enter into your own life and become the best part of it.

One might perhaps object: Is there not a great deal of make-believe in all this process? Certainly there is: and what of that? Provided it serves the purpose of love, provided it enables you to receive in your soul a more vivid impression of the divine realities, all is well. I do

not see why we should be highly approved when we apply this marvellous and dangerous power of ours to imagine things and endow them with colour and movement and life, to all profane subjects of past history, and should deny ourselves the help this power can afford us in sacred subjects: the more so that, precisely herein, we can count upon the help of the Holy Spirit if we humbly pray for it.

The Church in the sacred liturgy is constantly appealing to our senses and imagination, urging us to make a generous use of them in divine worship. The Saints, on their part, have done so to an extent which may amaze us at first, but which is quite enchanting, and we can do no better than imitate them as much as possible. Here a decided return to the candour and simplicity of little children will stand us in good stead.

As an example in point, let us borrow a page from the little book THANKSGIVING AFTER HOLY COMMUNION of Father Villefranche, 2nd edition, p. 30.

"We can also imagine scenes. Let us hear how St. Bonaventure encouraged his novices to adopt this method:

"Imagine," said the seraphic Doctor, "that you are making a visit to the Child Jesus in Egypt. . . . The Holy Child runs to meet you; He is so winning! You kneel down and kiss His feet, and then you open your arms: He will repose within them, and for a few seconds you will taste the sweetness of His embrace. Then He will speak. Perhaps you will hear Him say, 'We have received permission to return to

Judea; we are leaving to-morrow. You have come exactly at the right moment; will you accompany us?' You will answer eagerly that you are delighted with His proposal; that your wish is to follow Him wherever He goes. . . . Then He will lead you to His Mother, and He will greet her lovingly and present you to her! You will bend the knee to her, and also make a reverence to St. Joseph, and take your rest beside them. . . . This way of making use of Our Lord,' adds the holy Doctor, 'may appear childish, but I assure you that it is a perfect means of nourishing our piety." (MEDITATIONS ON THE LIFE OF CHRIST. XIII.)

CHAPTER XIV

The Stupendous Event

I LIKE to represent to myself the Blessed Virgin at the moment of the Angel's visit, just as she has been quasi-miraculously depicted at the house of the Ladies of the Sacred Heart in Rome. She is seated as is proper for one who is really the Queen of Angels, receiving one of her servants. Meanwhile, as this servant of Mary is at the same time to her the ambassador of the Eternal Father, he prefaces his message by an unusual and amazing salutation. At this Mary is troubled, for she has an intuition that he is carrying out anything but a celestial visit of pure courtesy, so to speak.

Then the Archangel tells her all at once that she is not mistaken, and that he is concerned with nothing less than the raising of her to the dignity of being the true Mother of God. Then see how wise and prudent she is: notice how completely she recovers her presence of mind, and how she is considering within herself her vow of virginity to God. A pious tradition assures us that Mary already knew that the Mother of the Messiah would remain a virgin, according to the well-known prophecy of Isaias, *Ecce virgo concipiet,* Behold a virgin shall conceive (Is. vii, 14), and that she at the same time had made a vow of virginity in order to merit being the servant of the Virgin Mother of God.

Then, since she knew this much, why her question, "*How shall this be, seeing that I know not man?*"

Quite simply, she asks to be informed (she had now the right) of that which the prophecy of Isaias passes over in silence—the ways and means of the miracle. This interests Mary in the highest degree, since it is she who is the one chosen of God to this end. Her question has not, in itself, the smallest element of doubt or hesitation as to her acceptance. If she desires enlightenment, it is that she may utter her *fiat* with full knowledge of the case, with all the greater fervour and self-surrender.

The Archangel's reply to this question of hers is indeed of a kind to inflame the heart of Mary, and to throw her wholly, body and soul, into a transport of love befitting so great a mystery. The angel replies in substance: O Mary, this is by no means a work of the flesh. For the accomplishment of this marvel, the three Divine Persons will come unto thee in such a way as they have never come to any created being. The Father and the Son will presently make to thee a new and ineffable communication of their Holy Spirit of Love, to the end that thou mayest be wholly worthy of the sacred mystery, with thy body and thy soul, both already so pure. Then the Father, overshadowing thee in the veil of His unspeakable sanctity, will impart to thee His Divine fecundity, and the Son will be born of thee.

As soon as she heard these words, the immense import of which she took in at a glance, the

eyes of her soul being powerfully illumined by the Holy Spirit, Mary stood up and then threw herself on her knees. With her eyes lifted to heaven—her arms extended as though to receive and embrace the Son of God, she said *Ecce ancilla Domini: Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done to me according to Thy word.* (Luke i, 38.) Then she crossed her hands upon her breast, bowed her head down with the profoundest reverence, and worshipped in herself, within her chaste bosom, the *Sanctum Domini*, who was born of her, and at this very moment was making the offering of His Flesh and Blood for the world's salvation.

In a moment was the great mystery accomplished.

Let us admire the power of Mary's *Fiat!* At the beginning God had said *Fiat lux! Fiant luminaria magna . . . et stellae.* And before all these fiats which organized the material universe, God had pronounced a fiat which is not mentioned in the Scriptures at all—the fiat which caused the nine shining choirs of angels to leap out of nothingness—all beautiful, innocent and holy *ab origine.* But the Fiat which the Holy Spirit places on the lips of this tender young virgin, and which He causes to take effect in her interior, is incomparably more powerful, more marvellous, since its object is no longer concerned with creatures, be they never so numerous and beautiful—it is God: it is a Divine Person: it is THE WORD! *In principio erat Verbum. . . . et Verbum caro factum est. In the beginning was the Word,* and in Mary *was the Word made flesh.*

How long did Mary remain in amazement at the advent of the Son of God within her, and in the transports of her worship and thanksgiving? Many hours, most assuredly. And when she humbly returned to the course of her ordinary life, St. Joseph, without suspecting the extent of the miracle, clearly saw that something unusual and magnificent had taken place between his most holy spouse and God. With the discretion of the Saints, of whom he is presumably the greatest, St. Joseph restrained himself from putting the smallest question to his gentle spouse, until she should speak of her own accord; and on her part, Mary, with the humility befitting the Queen of all the Saints, kept the secret of the King of Heaven inviolably sealed within her heart—God would know how to reveal it in His own appointed time.

Let us who know the mystery, adore it in the white cloud of the Immaculate Virgin's flesh. Let us include St. Joseph in our veneration and in our sympathy. Let us in spirit hasten over the moment when this wonderful servant of God will have passed through the dreadful ordeal which awaits him, and when he will see in the arms of the Virgin-Mother who is his spouse, the *Sanctum Domini*, the Holy One, the thrice Holy, the Word made Flesh of his virgin spouse's flesh, the Lamb of God, the Saviour of the World!

CHAPTER XV

The Infant God

LET us try to fathom the notion of an infant God.

Who amongst us would consent—whatever the consideration might be—to become a little infant again, retaining all the knowledge and feelings of a man, whilst foregoing the right to manifest them?

With full consciousness of one's self, who could wish to become once more that powerless creature, without an articulate word—an infant, in swaddling clothes, nourished at the breast, dependant, without strength, carried on a woman's arm, and counting so little in the world's life and the ordinary sequence of events?

Would the small boy of five, eight or twelve years of age like to become a babe again? Only speak to him of such an idea, and you will see with what magnificent disdain he will scout such a suggestion, not because it appears to him ridiculous and impossible, but because, were it possible, he would not have it at any price. His ambition is to become a man.

And the full-grown man in the prime of life, in complete possession of all his powers, and in the rightful pride of his dominion over the world—would he now be willing to become a little new-born child?

Remember that it is not a man, but a God

who has done this. The God Who, by His infinite Wisdom, Might and Goodness, has built up the universe, preserves it and conducts it to its end—this Divine Person, the Word, Who is the substantial Wisdom of God the Father, is made flesh, is made a little Infant—a babe, and before He suffers Himself to be carried in arms, to be swaddled or suckled, is concealed within the embryo of a human body, hidden within the mother's womb.

It is a great mystery of love, worthy of my whole worship.

. . . . . .

Now let us consider the other aspect of the same mystery.

O Infant Jesus, Thou art the Word—the Word of the Eternal Father, the Divine Word, the everlasting song which the Eternal Father chants to Himself; God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, whiteness of the eternal brilliance, spotless mirror of God's Majesty, image of His excellence, supreme Good, the great I AM. O Jesus, Infant Jesus, Eternal Word, my Love!

Nothing is beautiful, nothing good or lovable but Thou, O Divine Word, who hast become a little Child for love of me—and Thy Father who begot Thee in His own likeness, and Thy Holy Spirit of Love who proceeds from the Father and from Thee. None is good but Jesus the Word of God. None is good but the Holy Spirit of Jesus and of the Father. Oh, how is the man to be pitied who knows Thee not, Infant Jesus, Word of God! Even amongst those who profess the true faith, are there not

many who know Thee not? These are they who offend Thee.

No; they know Thee not.

Is it possible to know Jesus, the Word of God, and not to love Him? And if one loves Him, is it possible to offend Him?

At the very instant when the Christian commits a sin—even before he performs the act of sinning, his soul has already undergone an eclipse. Either he turns aside so as not to see Thee, or he plunges in wantonness of heart into shadowy caves, or he allows a dense cloud to intervene between his soul's gaze and this most lovable object, who all the time is his soul's light, even Thee, O my Jesus, O Word of God.

My Jesus, Infant of a few hours, as the Divine Word Thou hast no age. Age is a measure and Thou art measureless. Age marks the beginning and succession of being, but Thou art without beginning and utterly immutable as Thy Divine Father. The eternity is not a succession; it is the ETERNAL NOW, the HODIE, incomprehensible to us, in which the Father begets Thee in the splendours of infinite sanctity: EGO HODIE GENUI TE!

O Infant Jesus, Divine Word, I worship Thee in Thine infinite perfection, in Thine Eternal Generation, in Thine immutability, in Thy full and perfect possession of sanctity which Thou receivest from Thy Father, and which is Thine Essence. But why should my stammering tongue speak of such things?

My soul, let us be still and let us worship in silence.

CHAPTER XVI

The Day after the Nativity

I GO in spirit to the Cave of Bethlehem; and I inquire tenderly about the Infant Jesus. Did He sleep well? Did He wake in the night? Has He cried and wept, or rather wailed, for He is so very small? And so, sweet Mary, you have offered Him your virginal breast. He has taken milk like any other small infant, just as I did myself at that age, and He has gone to sleep again upon your gentle bosom. Now you can say: *Dilectus meus mihi, et ego illi, qui pascitur inter lilia.* (Cant. ii, 16.) He is mine; He is my own true Son, and I am His happy Mother, His too highly honoured servant; wholly His, and He finds His delight and His rest between the lilies of my virginal bosom. Again you can say, O wonderful Mother: *Fasciculus myrrhae dilectus meus mihi: inter ubera mea commorabitur.* (Cant. i, 12.) My little Jesus is to me a fragrant nosegay, which bloomed delightfully. I will always carry Him upon my breast.

I have the greatest delight in praising you, most sweet Virgin Mary, but I have one mercy to ask of you, a great mercy, a very great favour. You are smiling, dear Mother; have you guessed what is in my mind? How kind of you, O Mary; yes—it is just that, you are anticipating my wishes. I should like to see your dear little Jesus asleep.

Oh! how enchanting He is in His slumber, with His sweet little eyes tightly closed, His dear little rosy mouth half open, and His breath, lightly drawn, rhythmically raising His tender breast. Sleep, gentle Jesus, sleep. I know that Thy Heart is watching. Sleep, my infant Saviour; the time will come, speedily enough, when Thou must watch and pray for me and my fellow sinners, passing whole nights in prayer, *pernoctans in oratione Dei.* (Luke vi, 12.) The time will come when Thou must agonize in the Garden of Olives, then be dragged at midnight through the streets of Jerusalem to the house of Annas and Caiphas, implacable enemies of Thine—be condemned to death as a blasphemer and deceiver by the spiritual guides of Thy people, and be denied thrice before cock-crow by the chief of Thine Apostles. O dreadful night which will usher in a day more terrible still, bloody, and tragic beyond all conception! Sleep, then, gentle Jesus, sleep whilst Thou canst. During the day I will return to see Thee awake and smiling, to take Thee in my arms and cover Thee with my kisses, if Thy sweet Mother will let me.

She *will* let me! How happy I am—and see! before letting me go she embraces me. Thank you, Mother Mary. St. Joseph, too, embraces me, and putting his hand gently on my head, blesses me. Thank you, dear, kind St. Joseph. How happy I am! I seem to be treading on air. My heart is singing within me, and my steps are springing like those of a young roe.

Returning in the morning at eleven o'clock—

for I could wait no longer—I find the Holy Child fully awake, with His beautiful eyes—lovelier far than all the stars of the firmament—wide open. I could not restrain myself, I uttered joyful shouts, and, like David before the Ark of the Covenant, I began to dance—for here, indeed, is one infinitely greater than the Ark, here is the God both of the Ark and the Covenant, here God reveals Himself no more as a terrible being, but as one altogether lovely. How beautiful Thou art, my little Jesus! How enchanting! Oh! I must needs embrace Thee!

And I hasten forward, though gently, trembling with happiness. Tears of tenderness fall from my eyes. Mary is quite willing that I should lift Him up; she shows me how to hold Him, she helps me; and here I am at last, with this light burden on my arm and upon my heart. Is not this sufficiently amazing? Truly, I bear Him who bears up the universe. After Holy Communion, Christian, thou carriest in thyself Him Who carries the universe.

Dare I venture to kiss Him?—to touch Him with my sinful lips? Most certainly, for I know that He has come for this very reason, to show Himself to poor sinners in a form that can cause them no alarm. Who could fear so small a child? In this form He wishes to charm their poor hardened hearts, to melt them into tenderness, to be covered with kisses by them and to be bathed in their happy tears. Behold then, what I am about to do, dear Infant Jesus, tender Saviour, my dear Love, and my Child-God. I kiss and worship Thee. I kiss Thee and ask of Thee pardon for all my sins, for the trans-

gressions of my whole life, for all the failures of love of which I have been guilty. I kiss Thee that I may regain purity by contact with Thine innocent Flesh. I kiss Thee that I may learn once more in Thy divine and infant school, the ways of purity and love.

Dear Mother Mary! How happy you are! How I congratulate you on being so pure and holy, so perfect and so worthy of Him! I rejoice that He has made you such a paradise of delights for Himself.

And you, dear St. Joseph, purer than the nine choirs of Blessed Angels, wondrous masterpiece of divine grace, created expressly to be the worthy protector of the Virgin Mother, and the worthy Foster-Father of the Infant God, how one is fain to admire you, to praise and bless you! Oh pray for me!

Before going away, I had taken up the dear Infant again and again, fairly devouring Him with my caresses. I had kissed not only His dear little face, but His tiny feet, His little hands, and His dear breast in which the heart of the Infant God was beating.

I was going to give Him back to His Mother with sighs of contentment and regret, when the idea seized my mind of giving up myself—my own self, as I had just done with the Infant Jesus—for the period of my whole life—to the kind care of Mary and Joseph.

O gentle Mother Mary! O great St. Joseph! Receive me, I humbly pray you, into your holy keeping, as the Infant Jesus Himself, whose least, unworthiest, and meanest servant I am. You know, for His own dear lips have uttered

it: *Whatsoever ye shall do unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me.* (Matt. xxv, 40.) By the love which you bear to our dear Infant Jesus, take charge, I beseech you, of the rest of my poor life. Grant that as I advance in age, I may become as a little child, like the Infant Jesus. Grant that I may copy the virtues of His divine Infancy, especially His entire abandonment, in your arms, O Mary and Joseph, to the providence of the Eternal Father. Say yes, I beg of you. Grant me this favour through Jesus, your sweet treasure, Amen.

Am I heard?—Yes—and in consequence I trouble no more to look after myself. I am the adopted son, foster-child, pupil, ward of Mary and Joseph. These are the two who are taking charge of me; they will see to it that I be in want of nothing; they will lead me in the paths of life; they will sympathize with all that concerns me. Joseph and Mary are to me, as to the Child Jesus, both Father and Mother. They assent to it. Never will I forsake their holy guardianship.

Be of good cheer, then, O my soul: we are now in good hands: take courage, let thyself go; think no more of self than does the Divine Child Jesus. Abandon thyself, as He does, in the most absolute way, to the care of divine providence, in the arms of Mary and Joseph.

O ecstatic joy! And it all comes from a visit to the crib.

CHAPTER XVII

The Purification as Celebrated by Blessed Henry Suso

"AT the time of the Purification of the Virgin, in order to make himself ready to receive her devoutly in the Temple, Brother Henry would set apart the three days which preceded this feast, and he then honoured symbolically the virginity, the humility and the maternity of Mary, by burning a three-branched candle, and by reciting the 'Magnificat' thrice a day.

"On the morning of the solemnity, before the people came to Church, he would go to prostrate himself before the high altar, and there he meditated on the glories of Mary, just at the moment of her approaching to bring her dear Son into the Temple: then he raised himself up, and imagining that she had arrived at the Church door, he called all the friends of God, and together with them went to the door and on the public square to receive the Holy Mother and her Divine Babe.

"When he had met her, he begged her to be willing to stay a moment with her train, to listen to a canticle which his heart wished to sing to her in the silence of his soul, with the help of all those who loved her: then with tenderness he intoned this spiritual hymn: *Inviolata, integra et casta es, Maria, quae es effecta fulgida coeli porta;*

suscipe pia laudum praeconia; O benigna, quae sola inviolata permansisti. 'Thou art pure, thou art chaste and without stain, O Mary! Thou hast become the shining portal of heaven; receive the devout tribute of our praises, O compassionate Virgin, who alone hast preserved thy purity.'

" At these last words he humbly bent his head, and besought Mary to have compassion on his heart so poor and burdened with sins; then he would arise and turning towards the altar, he followed her, holding the candle whose mystic brilliance he caused to shine, in order to ask of Mary that she would never allow the light of the Eternal Wisdom and the flame of divine love to be extinguished in his heart. He then addressed all the friends of God, engaging them to sing with him the anthem *Adorna thalamum*, etc., and to receive the Saviour and His Mother with the liveliest feelings of love and praise.

" On arriving at the altar, at the moment when Mary was offering her dear Son to the aged Simeon, he begged of her, humbly prostrate on the ground, with eyes and hands towards heaven, that she would show him her Child, allow him to embrace His feet and His hands, and to entrust Him for an instant to his soul. Mary consented, and Brother Henry, trembling from head to foot with joy and love, took Jesus into his arms, pressed Him to his heart, embraced Him again and again, as though he actually possessed Him. He contemplated with delight His shining eyes, His countenance pure as milk, His lovely mouth, His little hands, His body, white as snow, His childish limbs, shining with

a heavenly brightness. In his transport and ecstasy, he was wholly moved, wholly astonished to see the Creator of all things at the same time so great and so small, so beautiful and so sublime in heaven, so weak and so poor on earth!

"It was in the midst of his songs, tears and thanksgiving that he gave up the divine Child to Mary, and accompanied her to the choir, and in the ceremonies of the feast" (LIFE OF BLESSED HENRY SUSO).

The more we enter—even we, with this spirit of artless simplicity, into the contemplation of the mysteries of our Jesus, the more progress we shall make in the knowledge of Him and His love. He will reveal Himself to us without the sound of words, and He will give us so powerful an impression of His divine goodness that we shall be amazed at it; and then He will introduce us into the contemplation of the Most Holy Trinity.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Flight into Egypt

I ASK St. Joseph permission to go with them. I will wait upon them.

He did not venture to take upon himself to give me this permission: the Angel had said nothing on that subject. I said to him: Consult the Blessed Virgin: you will see she will say yes. Am I not also her child? I am one with the Infant Jesus: I identify myself with Him: we cannot possibly be separated.

Through her tears and anxiety, sweet Mary smiled a smile of approval. What a joy for me! How I shall strain every nerve to give them all possible help! I am going to assume the duties of a good watch-dog, of a devoted slave, of a servant, of a child of the family, of an elder brother of the Infant Jesus. If need be, I will offer myself to death to further their flight.

The first stage was a long one—indeed quite as long as they dared make it without risking the death of the poor ass upon which Mary rode. She and Joseph maintained a strict silence. They did not wish to confide their apprehensions to each other for fear of increasing them. St. Joseph, holding the ass by its bridle, quickened its pace, looking round from time to time to see if anyone were following them. Mary pressed her Treasure to her heart, and I could

clearly see that in order to seize Him they would be obliged to kill her. I shuddered at the thought. It was possible, did they so desire, to slay both the Infant Jesus and His Mother under the very eyes of St. Joseph, who was powerless to defend them. Under our eyes! My God, what should I do if this calamity should happen? Ah! I would die with them.

It was with a mind greatly preoccupied and troubled with such fears, that we rested by the roadside for the midday meal.

We had set out in haste at midnight; we had not broken our fast; we had moved on at a great pace without stopping for an instant, and now no one seemed to be hungry. St. Joseph made a pretence of eating in order to encourage Mary. Mary did likewise in order that her holy Spouse might take something, but both of them were still far too full of anxiety. They had much the appearance of two startled birds. When in this way they had made a pretence of eating, excepting the dear Child Jesus Who had drunk His milk from the virginal cup of Mary's breast, they began their advance again with the same feverish solicitude.

Evening came, and I pointed out to St. Joseph a suitable position for encamping at the verge of a thicket. There was some dead wood for a fire, grass for the ass, a running stream, and there was shelter from the wind and from inquisitive folk on the high road. I know a thing or two. It is not for nothing that I have lived for thirteen years in a wild country, and oftentimes camped in the open air.

The question was how to lodge the travellers

comfortably. Poor sweet Mary! How wearied and worn out you look! It is absolutely necessary this time that you should take nourishment, for you see, unless you do so it is not only you who will suffer, but your Divine and beloved Child as well: how could you suckle Him? Leave it to me. Here are some herbs, the properties of which I know, and I am going to make you a plentiful decoction. . . . There. See! It is already made, and my Queen graciously consents to receive the draught at my hands—only she first hands it to St. Joseph, and persuades him to drink part of it. What a relief it was for me to see the dear Saint completely refreshed by this simple draught! Now it is my Mother's turn, and she, too, after having taken a good draught of it, shows by the reinvigorated appearance of her lovely face, that she has gained real relief. She has left a little at the bottom of the cup. I drain it greedily with delight. That which Mary and Joseph have left; what a favour for me to receive!

CHAPTER XIX

The Childhood of Christ

ONE YEAR OLD.

He does not speak, but He is wide awake and notices many things.

He already has His little preferences, and knows quite well how to make them known. He holds out His little arms to me—this dear, tender friend of my heart—and tells me by all His movements as clearly as words themselves can do: *Pone me ut signaculum super cor tuum, ut signaculum super brachium tuum.* "*Place me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm.*" (Cant. viii, 6.) Oh! I do desire it, Holy Child Jesus! I wish to impress Thee upon my heart and my entire self—to carry Thee with me everywhere.

A mother delights in holding her dear little infant on her left arm, as she goes to and fro carrying on her work with her right hand. So did Mary with her beloved Divine Child, and so may I likewise do in my own case.

O dear Child Jesus, whilst I am reading, writing, preaching, or performing whatever act of my sacred ministry, I am in spirit holding Thee reposing on my left arm and on my heart, and Thou art looking at my poor work out of Thy dear eyes, and Thy little hands are caressing my face. Oh, how sweet it is to feel these

baby hands of Thine! But, is it true—that one day they will be cruelly pierced, nailed to a wooden cross, and torn by the whole weight of Thy sacred body on the Cross? I kiss these dear little hands which are doomed to suffer so terrible a torture, all because of me, and for my sake.

O my Love, my Love, my tender Love, my little Jesus! *I wish to put Thee as a seal upon my heart, as a seal upon my arm* (Cant. viii, 6), and to keep Thee there for ever.

Four Years.

At the age of four the Child Jesus was growing wholly gracious. Still small enough to be taken up and carried in arms, an action which Mary and Joseph would do with unspeakable rapture—yet big enough to walk alone, and to make much happy stir in the house and round about it.

The Child Jesus began to smile, to laugh and prattle, and to enter upon an innocent and happy life, like other dear little children of that age. I cannot imagine the Child Jesus frowning. No doubt from time to time His sweet Mother and His foster-father had suddenly come upon Him and found Him rapt in a state of prayer infinitely beyond His age: but as a rule His appearance and conduct were those of the most beautiful, perfect, natural and loving little child that ever existed.

I can imagine that men—and still more, women—would love to stop Him in the street, in front of the house, both to make Him talk and to caress Him. His little companions

too, unconsciously attracted to Him, would love to embrace Him, and He would show them all the marks of the most loving friendship. All would admire Him, all would love Him, all would wish that they might in some way belong to Him, and He to them, and when they would take Him in their arms, and press Him to their hearts, they would not understand, poor, blind creatures, the secret of His irresistible attractiveness. They would not understand that they were holding the supreme, absolute, indefectible Being, the source of all good, God Himself. He never manifested His Godhead to them at all, for then they would have fled away from Him, terrified! St. Peter's utterance after the miraculous draught of fishes is indeed the utterance of all fallen humanity—suddenly brought face to face with infinite holiness: "*Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!*" (Luke v, 8.) No: they could never have ventured further, or even desired to be more familiar with Him. But Jesus, the Infant God, the Word made Man, desires that men, His brethren, should approach Him, take Him in their arms, place Him upon their heart and be familiar with Him. The Jansenists, blinded by their human way of thinking, have never been able, any more than worldly people, to understand this, but the Saints have understood it.

The Holy Child, at four years of age, was more desirous of receiving the caresses of all people, and of bestowing His own, than any of them, especially the more affectionate, could be to kiss and embrace Him. Dear Holy Child! Didst Thou not cause some of them, more highly

favoured than the rest, to perceive the very secret of Thy charm?

They congratulate St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin on having a child so affectionate, so sweet, of such ravishing beauty, and they remark upon His strong likeness to Mary. Men would believe that it was from her He had derived all His charms—whereas, on the contrary, it is from Him that she had received hers. But the greatest beauty, both of Jesus and Mary is wholly interior, and hidden from the eyes of the flesh. *Omnis gloria Filiae regis* (et Filii Reginae), *ab intus.* Oh, the innermost of the Child Jesus, where burns the flame of His Deity, at the centre of a human soul whose perfection is as it were infinite! And the interior loveliness of His sweet Mother, who receives the vehement communications of His grace, without ever placing the least hindrance in the way!

Yet there were occasions when this little Prince, so gentle, gave way suddenly to a storm of tears, sobs and cries. It was when He happened to see or hear men offend His Eternal Father. He gave way then to transports of grief as though His little Heart would break. All His tender bodily frame would shake convulsively, and Mary, who understood so well the meaning of His cries and sobs, must then needs take Him in her arms, mingling her tears with His, and gradually pacify Him by her gentle words.

At these times the face of St. Joseph was also bathed in tears, and falling devoutly on his knees, He would offer to his God and foster-Child every reparation which his devotion could suggest.

O Joseph and Mary, let me unite myself to you! Dear Holy Child Jesus, wounded to the heart by the sins of men, I ask Thy forgiveness. I hate these hideous sins, both mine own and those of all my fellow men. Save us from our evil ways; make us wholly like unto Thee.

The Plaything of the Child Jesus

Here are some lines of unusual charm, written by one who surely was a great mystic:

"For some time past I had been offering myself to the Child Jesus to be His little plaything. I had told Him not to keep me as a costly toy which children must be content to look at without venturing to touch, but as it were a little ball of no value, which He could throw on the ground, kick with His foot, break, leave in a corner, or press hard to His Heart, if that should please Him. In a word, I wanted to amuse the Infant Jesus, and to give myself up to His childish humours. He heard my prayer. In Rome He pierced His little toy. . . . Doubtless He wanted to see what was inside—and then, content with the discovery, He let His little ball fall to the ground, and fell asleep. And what became of the forsaken ball? Jesus dreamed that He was still playing with it, that He took hold of it, and then in turn let it fall again; that He sent it rolling away to a great distance, and finally pressed it to His heart, without letting it escape from His little hand any more." (Soeur Thérèse de l'Enfant Jésus: Histoire d'une Ame. Ch. vi.)

And I, I have my own ambition as well. I offer myself to the Holy Child, like an old worn-

out wooden-shoe, cracked, broken, useless, which St. Joseph can tie with a string, and the little Infant Jesus can drag along, making plenty of noise, and uttering joyous shouts, as I have seen country little boys do: then leave it in the dust or mud of the road, where everyone can kick it, or pitch it far away. I shall not complain. Jesus will know quite well how to recover His old worn-out shoe, some day; He will then work a miracle of renewal upon it, and at the same time make of it a beautiful ornament for the Heavenly Jerusalem.

Eight Years of Age.

When he is eight years old, the small boy (I speak now of any boy) is nearly a man. He affects manly ways. He plays at being a man. His father can give him no greater pleasure than to associate him—according to his little measure—in his work. We might see, then, the little man filled with pride at carrying a tool or a piece of work, trotting along at the heels, or by the side of the full-grown man, whose calm power he admires, and whom he despairs of ever being able to equal.

Meanwhile he plays at being that which one day he desires to be—at being a priest, and he says Mass on a chair, in a paper chasuble, and, perhaps, his little sister or little girl-cousin offers the cruets and makes the responses—a grave infraction of the rubrics—but the innocent cares not a jot for that!—or at being a soldier, when he sees himself a great captain, leading his little comrades on to terrible mimic fights—or at being an explorer, who risks his life in the midst of

virgin forests filled with wild beasts and savage tribes—or it may be at being a ship's captain on a long voyage,—or a merchant, and in all these different characters he performs various feats which foreshadow truly what one day he will be. "The child is father to the man," says Wordsworth, giving us to understand what the germ contains.

It was hardly otherwise with the little boy Jesus at that age. His small body, the most perfect that ever was—developed in a fine harmony of proportion, and in an expansion of vigour and pliancy of which His perfect soul was the source. His youthful spirit seemed to be opening up to a conception of life childishly serious. One could have seen Him eagerly busying Himself round about His foster-father, striving to lift heavy loads, carrying them bravely, and trying, but in vain, to handle his carpenter's tools—quite happy when at last He found Himself able to make of two pieces of wood, roughly joined together, a cross of His own height, which He laid on His shoulder and carried to the top of a hillock, in the midst of the young Egyptians, His companions. They, of course, could understand nothing at all of this, and became all at once thoughtful beyond their age, when Jesus told them that in order to go to heaven, it was necessary henceforth that everyone should carry his own cross, and as for Himself, that He should die upon a cross when He had become a man.

Among these children, there was found one who cried out with beautiful feeling, "I will also die upon a cross; I will die with Thee,

Jesus!" A child of good disposition, but spoiled by his parents, he had formed a strong affection for Our Saviour. Later on he fell in with bad companions, who corrupted him, and led him into all sorts of crimes, until finally he was condemned to a disgraceful death. Did he then think of this incident of his infancy? In any case he recognized and worshipped his Saviour, and merited to receive from His lips the assurance of Paradise.

No doubt it was in this way that Jesus, as a little boy, foreshadowed His future ministry and His great sacrifice.

O Jesus, eight years of age, I bow down before Thee and adore Thee! My God, my true God, my Saviour and my Brother! I kiss Thy sacred feet, and rising again upon my knees—ever on my knees—I draw Thee into my arms, and strain Thee to my heart.

Dear Child, dear Child-God, grant that I may ever remain united to Thee, and that I may become wholly like Thee! Work this miracle for the glory of Thy Father, by the virtue of Thy Holy Spirit!

CHAPTER XX

Jesus at the Age of Twelve

MY soul, let us deeply inquire into the mystery of Jesus as a little lad, such as He appears in the incident of His three days' loss, and of His being found again in the Temple, amidst the doctors of the law, both hearing them and asking them questions.

First of all, let us admire this group of three persons:—Jesus, in all the grace of His twelve years; Mary, His Mother, so gentle and so modest; and the humble yet fervent St. Joseph—proceeding with several friends from Nazareth to Jerusalem, chanting psalms in the way, and reciting prayers with intervals of recollected silence.

Behold them at their destination! They give of their poverty to poor beggars, and to the treasury of the Temple; and Jesus amongst the crowd of worshippers passes, all unknown, through that Temple of which He is God. True, Mary and Joseph would worship Him; and I join with them.

Now the Gospel gives us the incident of His disappearance in broad outlines. It is for us to fill in the picture with such details as our devotion can suggest.

First of all, He did it on purpose; knowing quite well what He was doing, willing it both with His Divine and His human will: with

full knowledge also of the great sorrow He was about to inflict upon His sweet Mother and His foster-father. For reasons worthy of His wisdom, He stole away from the watchfulness of Mary and Joseph, at the very end of the festival.

It was all the easier for Him to do this, that the devout pilgrims would be leaving Jerusalem in separate bands, first the women, then the men at a distance of half a day; whilst children were allowed to join either the one or the other, indifferently. Thus we see how it happened that Mary and Joseph, each on their part, were persuaded that Jesus was with the other, and how it happened that they could not find out their mistake until after a day's journey, when the two bands reassembled.

What happened to the Divine Boy during the three days that He was lost by Mary and Joseph? Did He spend all this time in the Temple? I do not believe it. I have an idea of my own as to the way in which He spent the remainder of the time. I feel that He most probably employed this time in making a first pilgrimage through the streets of the large city and its immediate surroundings, to all the places which were to be marked twenty-one years later by some incident of His sorrowful Passion.

This would be His first round of the Stations of the Cross. How touching at this tender age! and with what love He did it! Ah! now I understand why He was really unable to take Mary and Joseph into His confidence, and to reveal His secret to them. It would have been too terrible—the very breaking of their hearts.

I take it, too, as extremely probable that the

Divine Boy's conference with the doctors of the law, to whom He put questions full of wisdom and penetration, had reference wholly to the coming Messiah, and to His sorrowful Passion.

The Child Jesus no doubt asked, first of all, from one of the doctors, who He thought the Messiah would be. The doctor straightway began to give Him a description as of a terrestrial monarch, more powerful, wealthier and more splendid than Solomon. Giving an interpretation, entirely materialistic, of the things which the prophet had spoken beforehand of the splendours of the spiritual reign of Christ, he assured his youthful questioner that the Messiah would conquer all the enemies of the Jewish people, and would exalt his nation above all the peoples of the earth.

Upon this, Jesus, very gently, and without giving any appearance of desiring to perplex the doctor, said to him: But how do you reconcile the description you have made with that which I have read of Him lately in the synagogue, in the fifty-third chapter of the prophet Isaias? "*There is no beauty in him nor comeliness; and we have seen him, and there was no sightliness that we should be desirous of him. He is despised and rejected of men: a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and we hid as it were our faces from him. Despised and the most abject of men, surely he hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows.*"

A group of doctors had formed round the two speakers, and they were looking and listening in utter amazement, at the winning gracefulness of the boy and the depth of his remarks.

Just as with the disciples at Emmaus on the evening of His resurrection, Our Lord, beginning at Moses and the Prophets, pointed out that it behoved Christ to suffer and thus to enter into His glory, so the little lad Jesus, by His questions to the doctors, caused all the marks of the Man of Sorrows, one after the other, to rise before their eyes—the Man, such as He Himself would be twenty-one years later.

Perhaps, too, probably quite naturally drawn by the sequence of ideas, may He not have traversed the ages, further back than Moses, and made inquiry as to that which the rabbis had discovered in certain prophetic types of the Messiah? First, Joseph, sold by his brethren and unjustly cast into prison, then made ruler of Egypt, and second in dignity to the King. Then Isaac, carrying the wood of his sacrifice to the mountain top and gently accepting his being offered a bloody victim to the Most High. Then Abel, hated on account of his devotion and the pleasure which God took in his offerings, and cruelly put to death by his brother Cain.

Then it was that Joseph and Mary arrived on the scene.

This very evening more than one doctor of the law returned to his home thoughtful, with a consciousness of supernatural impressions which he had never before experienced, turning over in his mind ideas which up to that time had been entirely unfamiliar to him.

By the hand of this Divine Boy the good seed had been sown in their hearts. What kind of ground was it to find there?

And as for thee, my heart, what sayest thou?

Mary's anxiety and grief had become inconceivable. She feared lest her Son might have fallen into the hands of His enemies. All the terrors of the headlong flight into Egypt came back to her, and her motherly heart showed her in imagination her beautiful Divine Child cruelly put to death, vainly calling His Mother and St. Joseph to His aid, and falling a victim to their neglect and the wickedness of men.

She knew that He was the Lamb of God who would expiate in His own blood the sins of the world. She knew that Isaac on the point of being sacrificed by Abraham was the figure of this dear Son of hers, and that Isaac was nearly at her Son's age when he climbed the mount of his sacrifice. She called to mind the prophecy of the aged Simeon, that a sword of sorrow should pierce through her soul. Ah! that terrible sword! She already felt its sharp point.

"*Thy Father and I*" . . . Mary calls Joseph the father of Jesus as though he were so in reality, in order that the doctors and other people who heard her could perceive nothing of any mystery, and Mary carried this out quite spontaneously, simply and naturally. This proves that Jesus ordinarily gave St. Joseph the name of father, just as He recognized his authority over Himself.

But in this particular instance He illustrates and proclaims clearly His own two natures, His divine nature, that is, His Divine filiation, at the same time as His human nature. Mary is

speaking of a human father, the sustainer of the human nature of Jesus Christ; Jesus replies by speaking of His divine Father, with whom He is one, and whose interests He has come to take in hand. "*Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?*" (Luke ii, 49.) As who should say: "O Mary, My sweet Mother, you are speaking of yourself and Joseph, your virginal Spouse, and of the rights of both of you over Me, but before you comes My Eternal Father, and His interests supersede those of your tenderness and solicitude for Me."

Let us notice as we proceed that Jesus at the age of twelve destroys beforehand the argument dear to Loisy and all the modernists, who would have us understand that at this time Our Lord could not have formed any consciousness of His true self, of His superhuman mission and of the hypostatic union of His human nature with the Godhead, and that He could not have perceived these endowments but by degrees, very slowly, and, as it were, with regret.

Is it possible to display a more explicit knowledge of His own Divinity, and of the great Messianic work laid upon Him than in these forcible words: "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" If Mary and Joseph could ignore His divine nature and mission—which was certainly not the case—the Child Jesus at least shows Himself fully conscious of them.

And besides, have we not the famous text of St. Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews x, 5-7, quoting David's psalm (xxxix, 8) as to this, that the Infant Jesus, in the bosom of His Mother

at the first moment of His conception, speaks to His Eternal Father, accepting the entire work of our redemption, in terms He could not have rendered clearer, more all-embracing, more characteristic of the Man-God, at the close of His life, and at the moment of His death on the cross?

Jesus, sweet child of twelve, Thou art my Teacher, I desire none other! Thou art already the Way, the Truth and the Life. Oh, I will follow, worshipping Thee always, everywhere.

CHAPTER XXI

Jesus from Sixteen to Thirty Years of Age

O DEAR Lord Jesus Christ, who reignest in glory at the right hand of Thine Eternal Father, and in the midst of Thy Church in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, suffer not my devotion to stray into false paths, as for instance, that of an almost entirely natural sentimentality. All the same it is true that Thou hast been a beautiful youth of sixteen years of age, the most lovely that has ever existed. "*Speciosus forma prae filiis hominum*" with all that is most gracious breathing from Thy lips, Thy whole countenance and Thy whole person.

This beautiful youth called Jesus is none other than Thyself, O God, O Word, O Eternal Son of the Father in heaven, "God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God," as we sing in the Nicene Creed.

O Light Divine, mayest Thou render Thyself gentle to the sick eyes of men who could never have borne all Thy brightness!

Thou, O my God, wert this Youth, gracious and strong, more refined than the loveliest of virgins, whose irresistible charms were not those of flesh and blood, but of sanctity and divinity. Gazing once again at Thy attractive form, and recollecting the intolerable splendour of Thy

divine essence within the transparent veil of our flesh, taken from the bosom of the purest of virgins, I realize how much Thou hast desired to bind us to Thyself, and to draw us after Thee by the *cords of Adam.* The reason, O Lord Jesus, Divine Word made man, why I wish to contemplate Thee at this lovable age of sixteen, is in order that I may be impregnated with the sweetness of Thy attractions. I want to make with Thee a compact of special friendship, and to be inwardly inebriated with the pure joys which Thou desirest to pour forth from Thy youthful and Divine Heart into mine, which is that of a poor old sinner, who nevertheless bewails and loathes his sins, and renounces them for ever.

At sixteen years of age, I can remember, I became a lover, without being conscious of the fact, without any suspicion of what was happening—a lover, that is, not of women, but of all that then seemed to me most desirable, because great, noble, generous and beautiful; a lover of poetry, eloquence, the beauty of nature, the feasts of the Church, the life of a hermit, virtue wherever I seemed able to find it—finally, and above all, of Thee, O my God—and this, too, after a human fashion, quite naturally, so it seemed to me, by a spontaneous process which did not exclude the supernatural, but which seemed to precede and accompany it, treading in its steps and playing all round it. I can assert that at that age, I had known, in a pure and virginal way, all the transports, the intoxications and the ecstasies of love. By fully recognizing in this love a gift from God, I could not help seeing

in it a blossoming of my own nature, fortunately enriched by a Christian education.

But, O God, O Jesus! who shall tell us of the human love, of the ever-springing poetry, of the saintly ecstasies and the holy inebriations of Thy youthful heart? Who will show us the fruits of this garden, of ground like this—human indeed but divine as well—of this young man's heart, united to the Godhead? O the Heart of Jesus at sixteen! I wish to honour this heart aright, as it deserves and desires to be honoured. Who will show me the way? You, O Mary, you alone, Mother of beautiful love and Mother of Jesus, you and your holy Spouse St. Joseph.

How did you honour this lovely youth and His Divine Heart? What did He inspire you to do, so as to please Him?

Ah! no doubt He would inspire you to imitate Him, to unite yourself to Him, to share His feelings and His joy in God which comes through the hypostatic union, a joy mingled from time to time, perhaps always, with a painful and vehement sadness because of the sins and the overwhelming misery of man His brother. All this, too, will I do, O Mary, most gentle and loving Mother. With you I shall be gladdened by the mystery of the Incarnation, and the profound joys of the heart of my young Saviour in His hypostatic union with the Deity. With you and Him I will thoroughly mortify myself for my sins and those of the whole world.

Jesus at Twenty.

With the exception of Mary, Joseph and the Angels, who will honour, who will worship

Thee, O my dear Lord Jesus, at the age of twenty? Who amongst men is aware that Thou art their God, the God of love, the Saviour? Who did offer Thee the homage and thanksgivings which were Thy due then, as they are to-day? For although up to that time Thou hadst not shed Thy blood for us, Thou wert willing to shed it: Thou wert ceaselessly mindful of it: Thou didst desire it, oh! so much more keenly than those who desire to go to a wedding banquet. I worship this longing of Thy Sacred Heart. I worship Thee, O Sacred Heart of my Jesus at twenty years of age!

Faber, fabri filius. (Matt. xiii, 55.) "A Carpenter, a carpenter's son," that, then, is all that men can notice of Thee at this period of Thy life—a man amongst men; a workman; son of a workman; a carpenter. They know not that Creation leaped forth from nothingness at Thy mere word—that Thy hands built the universe, that they moulded the temple of our body, so noble, so worthy of being the dwelling-place of a reasonable soul, nay of God Himself—before sin had come to defile both our soul and body. But Thou didst come to retrieve for us this great loss, and Thou didst begin to retrieve it by setting before us the example of a life of humility, hidden, without honour, laborious and painful. What can I do more in order to honour Thee in Thy voluntary abasement than courageously imitate Thee, and set myself to love that which Thou hast sanctified—work by the sweat of my brow? O Jesus, Divine carpenter, I kiss with affection those hands roughened by labour. Would that it had been granted me to

wipe away the sweat from Thy sacred brow! Ah! other drops than those of perspiration will soon appear beneath the cruel sharp thorns, dear Lord, dear and gentle Lord Jesus at the age of twenty years! In thirteen more years, it will come to pass. My Love! It displeases Thee not that I speak thus of Thee in anticipation, since Thou, too, dost hold Thyself unceasingly in readiness.

What, then, were the relations of Mary and Joseph with our dear Lord? Doubtless in their hearts they both would worship Him as their true God. They would have desired to do this without ceasing, at all hours, and in public, but He could not allow it. He would gently tell them, as later on He would tell John the Baptist, when he would fain have refused to baptize Him: *Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all justice.* (Matt. iii, 15.)

Jesus at the Age of Twenty-Five.

No doubt St. Joseph had been dead some time, and because of this, the young man Jesus, according to Jewish custom, had become the head of the little household at Nazareth.

His gentle Mother, to her unspeakable joy, ranked second after Him, and now more than ever made herself His handmaid, whilst He, the widow's son, the bread-winner, carried on St. Joseph's business. Plough-handles, ox-yokes, country wagons, homely benches and tables—these are what the hands of the Son of God would fashion. He carried these things to His customers, and held out His hand for His

hard-won earnings. This money, added to that earned by the Blessed Virgin with her needle, would be divided by them into three portions: one for the Temple, another for the poor, and the third and least, for their ordinary needs.

A young man of twenty-five, if still unmarried, has already looked about him for a companion in life—one who is to be the mother of his children. Frequently neighbours, gossips, and inquisitive persons, have already named, rightly or wrongly, the object of his choice. Good marriages are made—so it is said—in Heaven. Ah! why is it that it is not always these that are realized on earth? But how comes it that with this grand and gentle young man, of refined, nay majestic aspect—there is an exception to the ordinary run of things? His behaviour with regard to marriage does not happen to be made the object of the officious attention of His kinsmen and friends. As though by a secret and divine instinct, by an unspoken common agreement, all mention of marriage is excluded from what they say of the young Carpenter. In His presence, trivial chatter ceases; young maidens cast their eyes down, men and women feel uplifted, and carried into a region where there is no longer any question of sex and marriage, but where all live like the Angels of God. They perceive, too, the fitness there is in the fact that this grand and handsome young man should live quite simply with His gentle Mother, who, despite her extraordinary modesty, has the bearing of a queen. No one entertains the idea that they could ever be separated, so perfectly do they seem made for

each other, Jesus for Mary and Mary for Jesus.

O my Divine Master, full of gentleness and beauty, it is now that I begin to see in Thee, in Thy very Humanity, in Thy comely, manly countenance, *the whiteness of Eternal Light, the spotless mirror of God's Majesty, and the image of His goodness.* (Wisd. vii, 26.)

I worship Thee. I worship Thee. I worship Thee.

CHAPTER XXII

The Place of St. Joseph in the Mystery of Christ

IT is Catherine Emmerich, if I mistake not, who says that God called to Himself His faithful servant St. Joseph before the sacred passion of Our Lord, because Joseph was very tender-hearted and could not have endured to see Jesus and Mary go through such a terrible ordeal. Tradition places the event of his death even before Our Lord's entering upon His public life, somewhere between the twentieth and thirtieth year, that is to say at a moment when the mystery of the Incarnation had reached its due development and when the dawn of the mystery of the Redemption by the Cross was not so very far off.

We might call St. Joseph "the Saint of the Incarnation," because God made him its unimpeachable witness and incorruptible guardian, just as we call Gabriel "the Angel of the Incarnation" because he was made the herald of it. At the same time this warrants us to look upon him as our model in the contemplation of this part of the "mystery of Christ," for, indeed, next to our Blessed Lady, no reasonable creature on earth or in heaven, could compare with him in his loving contemplation of Our Lord.

St. Joseph is no doubt a special creation of

God's omnipotent love and grace. He was made for the express purpose of bearing a most momentous and delicate part in the historical event of the Incarnation of the Son of God, namely that of shielding the Virgin-mother from all obloquy and of fathering as his own, and rearing, the divine Child. Mary belongs to him as his true wife, and he is completely caught up and enveloped in the sacred history of the humanity of Our Lord, almost up to the time of His public life. He is so near God the Father that he seems the very shadow of His supreme authority over Our Lord and His blessed Mother. No wonder that he was prefigured by that other Joseph, the illustrious son of Jacob, in the Old Testament.

St. Joseph was a virgin among the virgins. We may well believe that there was no sting of concupiscence of the flesh in him. Not that he had been favoured, as Mary, with the privilege of an immaculate conception; but the grace of the Holy Spirit had, no doubt gradually, burnt out of him all remnant of sinful nature and added to the fulness of the seven gifts a special charisma whereby he could fulfil his sublime trust with more than seraphic purity and fervour of love. This we might consider as having been the remote preparation of St. Joseph for the great work of his life.

There took place, moreover, a very mysterious immediate preparation also in the form of a passive purification, the intensity of which we cannot comprehend; I mean the trouble which came upon him when he could not but notice the evident pregnancy of his most sweet and

honoured bride, Mary, already living under his roof according to Jewish custom, and depending on him for her support and protection.

Their betrothal had been most holy: full of the sweetest grace and mysterious joy. Mary, of course, did not know as yet that she was to be the mother of God; she knew but one great fact, this namely, that since her tenderest infancy, she had, by the special inspiration of the holy Ghost, consecrated her virginity to God. She felt that Joseph was providentially given her to be her comforter and faithful guardian, the strong support on which she might fasten the lily of her ineffable purity. She had begun forthwith to love and honour him as her husband, and he had already experienced that a virtue, an irradiation of sanctity went out of her, and raised him above himself. She reflected in his eyes the very holiness of God: so that not the slightest cloud from the lower regions of the flesh and the senses had come to dim the lustre of their immaculate nuptials.

And now conceive the amazement, the cruel pang of sorrow, the inexpressible perplexity of St. Joseph on discovering the pregnancy of Mary, and being unable to find any explanation of it but such as was dishonourable. This was a bitter, bitter discovery; and there was this added sting to it, that in his own eyes, Joseph stood convicted of having been wanting, though he could not see how, in his guardianship of the treasure God had entrusted to him.

In the CANTICLE OF CANTICLES (iv, 16) the heavenly Bridegroom exclaims: *Arise, O north wind, and come, O south wind: blow through*

my garden and let the aromatical spices thereof flow. The meaning is: Let spiritual joys and adversity alternately blow upon the fervent soul which is to me a garden of delights, for this is the way the perfume of her virtues can best be spread abroad. This is precisely what happened to St. Joseph. By means of the wonderful joys of his betrothal to Mary, of the Angel's message as to her divine motherhood, and of the Nativity of Jesus and alternate tribulations which came down so thick and fast upon him, his virtues and gifts were brought to their highest pitch.

I do not, for my part, suppose that the base and fierce passion of jealousy had the least part in St. Joseph's heart at this crucial moment. His love of Mary was too absolutely spiritual and unselfish for that. His grief was all for God and Mary; deploring that she should seem to have ceased to be what he had thought her, namely a true ark of the covenant built of incorruptible wood and covered inside and out with the refined gold of brightest charity, a choice vessel worthy of the most gracious favours of God. And, then, further, there was this great trouble, which pierced him to the heart; he could no longer continue to dwell with Mary, for fear of making himself, were it but in appearance, a party to the offence against God, by seeming to condone the glaring infidelity to His sacred law of marriage.

What was he to do? He must separate himself from her, and yet he could not bear to make himself her accuser: nay, when he looked at her serene, modest, prayerful deportment, he could not help being convinced that she was

not guilty. But, then, what of this state of pregnancy? Truly he was baffled, and during a few days, perhaps weeks, he did not know what course to pursue. At last his mind was made up. One thing he had resolved: there should be no public disparagement of Mary; she should not be made to suffer by any act of his own. To obtain this end there was but one course to pursue, a very hard one indeed for him; to go away privately, deserting his own God-given wife, and thus taking upon himself the obloquy of having seemingly brought her to the state she was in, and of shirking the austere duty of caring for her and her offspring. He would thus call upon his own head all the dishonour, and Mary, he knew, would find at her parents' a safe refuge. She and her babe would be honourably and tenderly taken care of by the aged, saintly and wealthy couple, Joachim and Anna.

All these emotions and irresolutions of St. Joseph one can read between the lines of the sober Gospel statement: *Now the generation of Christ was in this wise: when, as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together she was found with child, of the Holy Ghost. Whereupon Joseph her husband, being a just man and not willing publicly to expose her, was minded to put her away privately.* (Matt. i, 17-19.)

It was then that God, well pleased with the patience and humility and charity of His servant, intervened, sending His angel to reveal to him the mystery of the Incarnation and the part he himself was called to play in it.

Beside this great trouble that we have just related, no sooner was he entrusted with the care of the *Child and its mother*, than tribulations upon tribulations began to fall upon him. He had to set out on his journey to Bethlehem with Mary in a delicate condition. There in the city of David, whose lineal descendant he was, he could not find a lodging for his wife on the point of being a mother, and had to take her out, on the countryside to an abandoned stable. Eight days after, the circumcision of the Child took place, in which He shed, with great suffering, the first drops of His sacred blood, and the compassion of Mary and Joseph for Our Infant Saviour could not be expressed, the more so that perhaps they knew already something of the future mystery of our redemption. Thirty-two days later came the Presentation of the Child in the Temple and the dark forebodings of Simeon; shortly after that and the visit of the Magi, the flight into Egypt, with all its attendant hardships, privations and positive dangers, followed by years of exile amongst a people whose very language they did not know at their coming, and whose religion and customs were abhorrent to them. The return from Egypt was made particularly painful to Mary and Joseph by the hardship it entailed upon the Child Jesus, now too big to be carried in arms and still too young to bear such a long journey which had necessarily to be made partly, if not wholly, on foot. And, then, when Jesus was twelve, there came the greatest of all tribulations: the mysterious hiding away of Our Lord during three days in Jerusalem.

Now all this must have carried to an untold height of intensity the spirit of recollection and of prayer of St. Joseph and made him the ideal contemplative. He contracted the habit of retiring into his soul, and, with deep humility and fervent love, of speaking to God the Father about Jesus and His sweet mother Mary. He would say: "O Lord, it were not too much for all the angelical hierarchies to discharge such a trust and mount guard upon this two-fold treasure; and, lo, Thou hast committed it to my littleness." The sense of his own unworthiness and incapacity had, so to say, scooped out in the depths of his soul abysses of humility into which he plunged headlong. Then God would suddenly illuminate his mind and kindle his heart to such a degree that no Cherub or Seraph could compare with him: and Joseph knew that he was made equal to his wondrous task.

It is piously believed that St. Joseph died of no ordinary illness of the flesh. The burning heat of his ever-growing love of Our Lord had secretly undermined his strength. The time came when he could no longer support the impetuous assaults of his love of God, especially when hearing from the lips of Jesus any prospective details of His sacred Passion. St. Joseph died of Love and of compassion for all that Our Lord was to suffer, and thereby deserves to be considered as more than martyr. He died in the arms and on the bosom of Our Lord, with Mary standing by and wiping the perspiration from his brow and holding his right hand and murmuring sweet words of comfort and farewell till they would meet again in glory.

O blessed death! May my own death be like it!

Then Mary and Jesus Himself fairly broke into sobs and tears at this departure of him who was so dear to them and such a part of their life. It was as though a large part of their very flesh had been ruthlessly torn away. Expressions of sympathy and regret were showered upon them by friends and neighbours; there was quite an outburst of appreciation of the dear departed one. Though St. Joseph had been a man of few words, it was plain that all who had come in contact with him had fallen under the charm of his gentleness and kindness. Mary and Jesus received gratefully these expressions of sympathy and it tempered the keenness of their sorrow.

They kept the memory of Joseph green for a long time by recalling the many incidents of their family life with him, in which his virtues had shone most conspicuously. They also allowed time to do its work, that is gradually to take away the sting of their sorrow, leaving them but the sweet perfume of a dear memory. Thus do Jesus and Mary stand as our models in all our mournings.

CHAPTER XXIII

The Public Life of Our Lord

MASTER, I will follow thee, whithersoever thou shalt go (Matt. viii, 19). So said this *certain scribe* of the Gospel and so say I also. I will follow Thee lovingly. After all it is only a question of a three years' apostolate through the narrow limits of the two provinces of Judea and Galilee, and I have Thy four blessed Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, for my guides.

I shall follow Thee on the banks of the Jordan, in the desert, on the lake-side, through the cities and hamlets, on the mountains, in the streets and in the temple of Jerusalem; now alone, anon with Thine Apostles, then with the great multitudes. I shall eagerly receive and treasure in my heart Thy words, Thine intimate conversations with Thine Apostles, Thy grand discourses on the Kingdom of heaven. I shall witness Thy miracles of mercy to bodies and souls. I shall observe Thy meekness, Thy modesty, Thy wisdom and prudence, Thy solicitude, Thy patience, Thy love, Thy courage, Thy sovereign mastery over Thyself, over the events of Thy life, over Thine enemies, until the time came for Thee freely to deliver Thyself to them and to allow death violently to wrench Thy sacred soul from Thy poor mangled body on the cross.

How many mighty deeds hast Thou compressed within these three short years! Calling Thine Apostles and undertaking their spiritual education and laying them as the foundations of Thy Church, with Peter as the corner-stone. Preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom; revealing the mystery of the blessed Trinity; proclaiming the great law of the twofold love of God and our neighbour. By the most wonderful series of miracles establishing Thy divine nature and oneness with the Father. Meeting the devil and breaking his power. Meeting Thine enemies, worse than devils, the hypocritical Pharisees, and tearing off the mask of piety with which they covered their malice and perverseness. Instituting Thy Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and Thy seven Sacraments. Giving to Thine Apostles and to their successors to the very end of time, the divine powers necessary to carry on Thy work, till Thou shouldst return in Thy majesty to judge the living and the dead and give to each according to their works. In one word, O my dear Saviour! during these three short years, Thou didst establish Thy New Testament and then seal it with Thy very blood. Oh! I will follow Thee through all the incidents of these pregnant years and learn of Thee, and love Thee.

Not by bread alone doth man live, but by every word which proceedeth from the mouth of God.

In these words, O dear Lord, is found, perhaps, the very best description of the purpose of Thy public life. They imply that souls have

to be fed as well as bodies, if we want them to thrive; that Thou, Son of the living God, camest down from heaven upon earth for this very end of feeding the souls of men; that Thy holy Gospel, and around it, the whole order of religion, is a spiritual feast spread before us for our delight; and finally that we ought, in consequence, to be eager to partake of that feast, to feed upon Thy words, nay upon Thy very person, by Holy Communion and by loving contemplation. Didst thou not say: *I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth in me shall never thirst?* (John vi, 35.)—*Eat; this is my body.* (Matt. xxvi, 26.)

One thought should dominate and pervade our contemplation of Thee, O Lord, during Thy life on earth, and more especially during Thy three years of Gospel apostolate, this namely: that by means of Thy sacrament of the Holy Eucharist thou art much nearer to us, much more with us, much more our very own, than was the case in regard to Thy contemporaries and the actual witnesses of Thy life, those who used to press around Thee, to eat with Thee, to touch Thy garments, Thy blessed hands and feet, to kiss Thy lips and receive Thy loving embrace.

By a lively faith and a fervent love, we obtain such an actual enjoyment of Thee, Beloved Lord, as was never vouchsafed to Thy contemporaries, even to the most highly favoured. The Apostles themselves were admitted to holy communion but once during Thy lifetime, whilst we can participate in it every day if we like. Ought not this thought to lift up our contempla-

tion of Thee to the highest pitch of rapturous admiration and thankfulness?

When Jesus addressed his third rebuke to the devil, in the temptation in the desert, then *the devil left him*, says the Gospel, *and behold Angels came and ministered to him* (Matt. iv, 11). St. Mark puts it in these terms: *He was with beasts, and angels ministered to him* (Mark i, 13). Behold, then, the new Adam in the midst of nature, among beasts which He has created and which come to pay homage to Him. He stroked each of them gently and caressingly. He shared with them the miraculous meat the angels had brought Him from paradise, even as we throw out our crumbs of bread to the birds, and more generous mouthfuls to the dog, our companion.

Our Lord's greatest miracles were wrought, and His sublimest dogmatic and mystical doctrines preached, whilst He was at table with His Apostles and a more or less considerable number of other favoured persons. Jesus made of the meals what they should ever be, occasions of the sweetest demonstrations of friendship, benevolence and love. When we sit at table is the time for relaxation and refection and saintly conviviality. There we ought to show the best side of our character. We shall surely do so if we watch Our Lord at table, and sit with Him and receive His teaching and carry it out in our actions. Then, again, we should invite Him to sit with us at our own meals and teach us with what dispositions we ought to partake of them; with what modesty, moderation, purity of in-

tention, Christian cheerfulness, charity to our neighbour, and spirit of thankfulness to God; taking also occasion of what we eat, to raise our minds to the contemplation of the heavenly table, where we shall sit with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the Apostles and all the Saints.

The bill of fare of St. John the Baptist in his desert was not a very full or *recherché* one: *Locusts and wild honey* (Matt. iii, 4), nothing more, and no doubt he refreshed himself with water from the nearest spring or running brook. There is a marked contrast in this regard between Our Lord and His holy precursor. Jesus never refused the invitations of his fellow-men to eat with them. Whether they were friends as Lazarus, or enemies as Simon the Pharisee, made no difference. *The Son of man came eating and drinking* (Matt. xi, 19) He said of Himself.

With some even He invited Himself, as was the case with Zachaeus when He also ate with a number of publicans and poor sinners to the grievous scandal of the haughty hypocritical Pharisees. O my brother, who readest these lines perhaps only in a spirit of curiosity, Jesus is passing by and inviting Hmself to dine with you: happy you, if you come down from your lofty critical attitude and entertain Him cheerfully. Much in the same way and again with most happy results did Jesus, in a way, throw Himself upon the hospitality of the poor Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. Jesus, perhaps, would do the same with you if only you listened to His pleading. He the guest, and you the host! And for the drink of cold water which is all

you can afford, He will give you the waters of heavenly consolation, *springing up even unto eternal life*. (John iv, 14.) Could you refuse to play the host to so generous a guest? Alas! it is only too true that many do so. Forgive them, O Lord, *they surely know not what they do*, and how great a loss they inflict on their own souls.

Jesus worked His first miracle, at the prayer of his sweet Mother Mary, during the marriage-feast of Cana. He changed water into wine, turning the impending sadness and confusion of His host into joy, and at the same time giving us the first inkling of the mystery of the holy Mass, where bread was to be changed into His body and wine into His blood. A little later on, after He had fed His Apostles and the multitudes with the bread and meat of His marvellous doctrine and had cured all their sick and infirm, He performed the first multiplication of loaves and fishes, and satiated a crowd of more than five thousand persons. He had only five loaves and a few fishes when He blessed them and began to distribute them by the hands of His apostles, but after they had all eaten their fill there remained twelve baskets full of the fragments. Here we have an image and prophecy of the multiplication of His own sacred body in the Holy Eucharist by the hands of His priests, every day, all over the world, and of the Reservation of the Blessed Sacrament.

Our Lord, in the act of performing His miracles, demands of us the tribute of our loving admiration and adoration, as they are

wondrous proofs of His omnipotence and of His divine nature. Here there could be no question of our imitating Him, except in the feelings of tender compassion and love which prompted Him to help all those whom He saw suffering, either in body or in mind. But that to which we ought to apply ourselves most in the contemplation of His miracles is to discover for our own edification their symbolical, spiritual meaning.

We can proceed in this search by means of familiar conversations with our Lord, asking Him whatever questions occur to us upon this subject, and humbly hearkening to His replies, which He will make in the form of some devout impression on our mind or heart or even sensibility: for it is by means of just such impressions that God speaks to us in mystical intercourse, and not by any articulate words, as some erroneously imagine. Whenever real articulate words are pronounced in the hearing of the mystic, then we are out of the common ways of Christian life and in the sphere of the miraculous, or possibly of some counterfeit of the miraculous. Of this it is not my intention to speak here.

Some most touching, most significant incidents took place at several of the banquets where Jesus was invited. How deep in the heart of the whole Christian world has sunk the story of that poor sinful woman who did not hesitate to break in upon the assembled guests at Simon the Leper's house, throw herself upon the blessed feet of the Saviour and bathe them with her tears, dry them with her dishevelled hair, kiss them and anoint them with perfume! The

scorn of the scandalized Pharisee for such a sinner was sharply reprimanded by Our Lord, who also absolved her from her sins and made a saint of her then and there.

When the Apostles had brought to our Lord some food which they had bought in the city of Sichar, whilst He was busy instructing the woman at the well, Jesus told them: *I have meat to eat which you know not. . . . My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, that I may perfect his work.* (John iv, 33-34.)

He never speaks of that other food of His soul, the beatific vision which He enjoyed from the moment of His conception in the womb, all through His life and even at the moments of His bitterest agony during His sacred passion. It seems as though doing the will of His heavenly Father in regard to our salvation was even dearer to Him than the enjoyment of the beatific vision; so strong and great was His love for His brethren whom He had come to rescue from sin and hell.

He spoke of His passion beforehand, and looked forward to it, and longed for it and went forth to meet it as though He were going to a banquet. Not a banquet, O my Jesus, but a very orgy of horrible sufferings will it be. To us also He answers: *My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, that I may perform his work.* And to His Apostles, speaking beforehand of the Last Supper which was to usher in His agony in the Garden and all that followed, He said: *With desire have I desired to eat this Pasch with you before I suffer.* (Luke xxii, 15.) And then it was that He instituted the two sacraments of Holy Eucharist and Holy Order,

and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass; the three pillars upon which rests securely the whole fabric of His Church.

CHAPTER XXIV

The Sacred Passion

BEHOLD the lamb of God, behold him who taketh away MY *sin.* (John i, 39.)

The true contemplative, instinctively, or rather by an interior motion of the Holy Spirit, always gives to his consideration of the Sacred Passion a distinctly personal turn, applying it all to himself, and bringing to bear upon it his own mind and heart and sensitiveness.

I am a priest. The other day a person came to me with a silver coin which he gave me saying: "Please, Father, will you say a Mass for my intention?" The next day he piously assisted at the Mass. It was his own Mass, all his own, celebrated for him. Now in spirit I walk up to my Lord, as he is just coming out of the room of the Last Supper: I press in His hands not a silver coin, but, ah me! a thing of baser metal, my own sinful heart, and I ask: "Please, dear Lord, wilt Thou celebrate Thy sacred Passion for my benefit? I will assist at it because I know it is mine, all mine own, and I will apply it to the ills of my soul."

There are three acts in the great drama, thus:

1. The terrible beginning, or the three hours' agony in the garden.

2. The terrible progress from the betrayal of Judas to the nailing of Jesus on the cross.

Twelve hours: from midnight of Maundy Thursday to midday of Good Friday.

3. The terrible climax, that is to say, the three hours' agony on the cross.

My sins have struck at Almighty God, and the insane blow has recoiled upon me and shattered my being. The mortal offence to the majesty and sanctity of God is atoned for by the sacrifice of the Lamb; and in His blood and in His wounds I find a remedy for my ills.

Take notice, O my soul, that in this grand liturgical function all the incidents of the sacred Passion which go before the crucifixion are so many preliminary ceremonies and as the putting on of the sacerdotal vestments. Only, in the case of Our Lord, instead of His putting on any vestments, it is the reverse which takes place. For this grand liturgical act of His own oblation on the altar of the Cross, our High Priest must put off or rather allow violently to be torn away from Him His own vestments. He must present Himself to His Heavenly Father with no other ornaments than the white alb of His virginal flesh, the purple mantle of His own blood profusely shed all over His sacred person, and the tiara of His crown of thorns. At the supreme moment, one of the bystanders, moved with pity at the confusion of His absolute nakedness, girded His loins with a cloth. Such an alms, at such a moment, will be richly rewarded on the Day of Judgment, when Jesus will say: *I was naked and you covered me.* (Matt. xxv, 36.)

Now think of the horrible tortures. After all the ill-treatment He has endured during the

twelve preceding hours, hear the sinister rattle of these instruments: the enormous nails, the hammer, the pincers. Hear the repeated blows of the hammer, the stifled groans of the victim, the answering cry of anguish of his tender-hearted Mother, Mary, and the jeers of the executioners and the Pharisees. My Lord, was all this barbarous display of wanton cruelty necessary? Thou answeredst: Yes. And I have only to hang my head in deepest confusion and sorrow.

Because my hands have been employed in doing evil actions, the innocent hands of my Saviour must be nailed to the cross. My feet have run in the ways of iniquity, therefore must His sacred feet be nailed also. My head I have held erect in proud and rebellious attitude, therefore must His be bowed in pain and shame unspeakable. My whole body has *served unto iniquity,* therefore must the whole sacred flesh of my Saviour be torn to shreds by the cruel scourging and then all His wounds be opened again and again by the putting on and taking off of His sacred garments two or three times repeated: so that, at last, as He hung on the Cross, the whole surface of His body looked like that of a man flayed alive.

In very deed is Jesus my victim, my very own victim, of whom I have been, by my sins, the executioner, whom I have cruelly tormented and at last done to death. Ah! my Lord, I DID NOT KNOW WHAT I WAS DOING. (Luke xxiii, 34.) Forgive me and ask our Heavenly Father to forgive me!

I had a friend—a priest—who could not speak of the Sacred Passion or hear about it or think of it (and he did so very often) without being quite overpowered and moved to tears, and who had the gift of communicating his emotion to others. I asked him how he had come by this gift. At first he showed some reluctance to give away his secret, but as I pressed him and implored him, he could see that it was through no idle curiosity, and so he finally yielded. He told me that what had developed in him such a sense of the Sacred Passion, was his having made a two-fold study of it in this wise. He had made out two distinct tables, so to say. The first contained an enumeration of all the incidents of the Sacred Passion in their historical sequence, and opposite to each of these he entered the mention of those sins of his which he thought had most contributed to torment Our Lord on this peculiar occasion. Then in a second table he followed the inverse process, that is to say, he made an enumeration of all his grievous offences against God, from early childhood even up to the time of writing, and he entered opposite to each of these, the peculiar suffering of Our Lord that he thought was the atonement and remedy for them.

I asked him whether the second table was not merely a repetition of the first, so that any one of the two would have served his purpose? He said "Not at all." The first table showed him what pains he had inflicted upon Our Lord and therefore how deeply contrite, and compassionate he ought to be to Him, whilst the second served the purpose of showing him what

sovereign remedy he could apply to his sins and therefore how grateful he ought to show himself to the dear Lamb of God. "In the first table," said he, "I have a greater regard to the drama of the Sacred Passion; in the second to the drama of my own wicked life. In both I do find an inexhaustible fountain of tears and contrition."

He went on to say that we must not shrink from facing with Our Lord the horrible and frightful realism of His Sacred Passion. We lose the sense of it too much, through being used to its literature, where it is more or less idealized and enveloped in pious conventional phrases. In truth it was all a display of the most brutal realism. Step by step, from the first stage of His agony in the garden, we wade through a flood of horrors, until at last the climax is reached on the Cross, when all is summed up in this cry of utter desolation: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* (Matt. xxvii, 46.)

"Some half-hearted, weak-kneed Christians," he continued, "deprecate our making the sorrowful Passion too hideous and heart-rending a performance as they say. Do they think it was an academical function? Truly the redeemed of Jesus Christ show themselves far too dainty and fastidious. The passion, as it was enacted by the enemies and executioners of Our Lord, was the most atrocious performance that could ever take place against any man; and when we consider that this man was the Son of the living God, the delicate Lamb of God, the marvellous son of the Virgin, the most perfect of

men, endowed with the most sensitive organism that could be conceived, there is no limit to the extent to which we may stretch the measure of His sufferings. And these Christians grudge Him their sympathy!"

My friend had to stop at these last words for his feelings of indignation fairly choked him.

I know also a religious who has made it a labour of love to collect all the texts, in either Testament, bearing upon the Passion of Our Lord, and then arrange them in due order, following the sequence of events as it can be made out of the four Gospels.

Thereby he has gained a wonderful impression of the length and width and depth, so to say, of this mystery. Particularly out of the Psalms of David, and out of Isaias, and the Canticle of Canticles and St. Paul's Epistles, did he gather views of the greatness and winsomeness of Our crucified Lord, which constantly fill him with inexpressible wonder and joy as well as compunction.

He told me that just as the saints of the Old Testament were types or figures of the Divine Victim which was one day to be slain, so also, we of the New Testament, have to be faithful copies of the same Divine Victim. Thus Our Lord bearing His Cross and then nailed on it, is preceded and followed by an immense multitude of loving souls that form around him a guard of honour; such a multitude as stretches out from the beginning of the world even to the end. Whosoever is not with Christ crucified is against Him, so that the history of the world is well summed up in the two cities of the CITY

OF GOD of St. Augustine and in the meditation of THE TWO FLAGS of St. Ignatius Loyola.

He told me that at the gate of this new paradise of delights, which is the sacred body of Christ crucified, there are *cherubim and a flaming sword turning every way* (Gen. iii, 24), to pierce through and through the loving souls that draw near; a two-edged flaming sword, wounding them, filling them at the same time with inexpressible sorrow and delight, the while they are contemplating now the head of their Lord crowned with thorns, then His dear feet, then His hands, then His side wide open, so that there is an easy access even to His heart all aflame with love.

Upon these words of the Canticle: *My beloved is white and ruddy* (Cant. v, 20), he commented thus: "He is white, oh! so white, so pallid, so very white, on the cross, from having lost nearly all his blood. And he is ruddy from the same cause. There is blood on Him everywhere. On the crown of His head, in His matted locks, all over His face; His beard is soaked with it. Blood on His neck, on His sacred shoulders, all over His chest and back; streams of blood along His thighs and legs. Blood trickling from the middle of His nailed hands, two fountains of it beneath and over His nailed feet.

"*My beloved white and ruddy,* in His sacrifice of holy Mass which is celebrated in memory of His Sacred Passion: white under the species of bread, ruddy under those of wine. White and ruddy on His throne of glory in heaven:

white in His immaculate flesh which He took from the Virgin Mary, ruddy in the splendour of His divine nature which He has from the Father; white in the ineffable sanctity which He has acquired by the exercise of all virtues during His life and still more during His Sacred Passion, for in His passion Our Lord offers to us the most magnificent exercise of all the gifts of the Holy Spirit, particularly the gift of fortitude; ruddy with the glory with which His Father has rewarded Him. *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and so to enter into his glory?* (Luke xxiv, 26.)

"It seems to me that when Our Blessed Lord entered into paradise on Ascension day, He must have thus addressed the Father: '*Lord, thou didst deliver to me five talents* (Matt. xxv, 15), that is to say this human heart of Mine wherewith to love Thee and My brethren, all men; these hands with which to serve Thee and them, these feet with which to run in the ways of Thy commandments: *Behold I have gained other five over and above* (Matt. xxv, 20), namely, these five wounds of Mine, which will endure for ever as a monument of My love and obedience to Thee, Father, and which will incessantly plead to Thee for My brethren.' Here I dare to break in upon my Lord's discourse and say: And behold, sweet Saviour, Thou hast gained other five, over and above, namely, my heart which henceforth will be wholly Thine, and these hands and feet of mine which will be employed only to do Thy will." Thus far my friend the religious.

This chapter, already somewhat long, must not close without our singing a paean of joy and victory.

Behold, God is my Saviour: I will deal confidently and will not fear. The Lord Jesus *is my strength, and my praise, and he is become my salvation.* (Is. xii, 2.)

I have a shield; it is Jesus crucified. I place it before my eyes, between myself and created things, and then their most inflamed and poisonous arrows fall powerless at my feet.

I have a remedy for all my wounds. It is my Jesus crucified. If I have received a petty insult—a slight offence against my self-love—slight but appearing terrible to me, I have only to place on this wound my dear Jesus crucified, and everything at once seems to me to be full of joy and health.

Alas! I receive other wounds; I commit sin. I inflict this evil on my poor soul! The remedy is the same Jesus crucified.

He is my oracle. In all doubts I consult Him, and He gives me a clear answer. There can be no more hesitation after that! I ask myself how, with such an oracle at hand, a Christian can be unable instantly to find the solution to his greatest difficulties.

He is my best book of meditation. When all others fail me or weary me, this one is always wide open, and causes my soul to be sensible of an appeal so warm that it is impossible for her to feel tired.

He interprets Holy Scripture to me: for this purpose nothing else better or indeed half so good as my Jesus crucified. He throws the

clearest light into all the recesses of the Old Testament, and makes for me, not only of Isaias, but of each of the other sacred Books, a real anticipation of the Gospel.

It is possible at the same time to clothe oneself in Jesus crucified: *Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.* (Rom. xiii, 14.) This is accomplished by covering ourselves with His merits and adorning ourselves with His virtues.

We are nourished with Jesus crucified. *My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.* (John vi, 56.)

Every day my sweetest and dearest occupation, my chief daily action—that which fills my life with glory—is to make, by means of my Mass (or my communion), a solemn commemoration of the sorrowful Passion. *This do in commemoration of me.* (Luke xxii, 19.) *For as often as you shall eat this bread and drink this chalice you show the death of the Lord until he come.* (1 Cor. xi, 26.) I am glad to notice that the devotion to my Lord Jesus crucified and that to his Holy Eucharist are not two different devotions, but one and the same. For what, in reality, is the most Holy Eucharist, but the victim of Calvary, Jesus immolated, Jesus crucified?

The Altar is now the place where we may find Him with His five wounds, which He will keep eternally; but instead of blood they will henceforth shed torrents of grace and rays of glory.

In an ecstasy of joy and gratitude let us repeat with the *thousands and thousands round about his throne in heaven:* THE LAMB THAT WAS

SLAIN IS WORTHY TO RECEIVE POWER AND DIVINITY AND WISDOM AND STRENGTH AND HONOUR AND GLORY AND BENEDICTION. (Apoc. v, 12.)

CHAPTER XXV

The Share of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Sacred Passion

HER share as being benefited by the Sacred Passion of her Divine Son, is—I say it with reverence and tenderest love—the lion's share. She is, herself alone, more benefited by it than all the rest of the redeemed of Jesus Christ. She was redeemed even before the fall by the foreseen merits of her Divine Son, and therefore she was preserved free from the stain and guilt of original sin. And as this privilege was granted her in view of her dignity of future Mother of Christ, she was at the same time and through the same merits, invested with such a sanctity as is second only to that of God Himself. So says the bull of Pius IX in the solemn definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception.

The Blessed Virgin Mary had also the lion's share of actual and personal experience in the fellowship with Christ suffering and dying: such a share as no created being, not even herself, could ever have borne without a direct, miraculous intervention of the power of God to sustain her life through it all.

It is God the Father who delivered His own Divine Son to death, and such a death. *He spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us.* (Rom. viii, 32.) Now God the

Father could not experience any compassion towards Him in His bitter sufferings; because it is impossible for sorrow or pain of any kind to enter into the pure Godhead; but, in order not to fail in this duty of compassion (I am speaking in a human way, of course) God the Father delegated the Blessed Virgin Mary to suffer and be compassionate in His stead. See what a sublime function Mary is discharging!

It therefore fell to the Blessed Virgin, jointly with the heavenly Father, to deliver to death her Son, the Man Christ Jesus, so much dearer to her than her own self. She had, first of all, to give her consent in advance to the Sacred Passion and terrible death of Him who was her life, her all in all. She had to renounce the natural right possessed by every mother of shielding her Son and snatching Him if possible from death; she had to waive even the right of pleading and expostulating for Him with the Father. She had to deliver Him up into the hands of divine justice, to the rigour of its vengeance; to thus deliver Him, not by an act of mere acquiescence, but by a positive giving up, as active and effective and personal as the *Fiat* of the Incarnation. Never has any other mother had to deliver her own son to death in such a way. A father, the only one in the course of all the centuries, Abraham, was ordered by Almighty God to offer his own son in sacrifice; but hardly had he raised his hand on the intended victim when the angel of the Lord intervened. It was a father, not a mother; not such a mother as Mary, not the mother of such a son as Jesus. The Blessed Virgin knew full well that in her case no angel

would intervene to stay the hands of the executioners: nevertheless she gave Him up.

Having thus delivered to death Him who was her very life, she does not hesitate to deliver herself together with Him: she opens wide the gates of her soul for the great flood of sorrow of the Sacred Passion to penetrate into her, or rather to overwhelm her in an ocean of bitterness. O *Virgin, daughter of Sion, great as the sea is thy grief.* (Jer. Lament. ii, 13.)

Sancta Mater, istud agas
Crucifixi fige plagas
Cordi meo validè. (STABAT MATER.)

" Rich queen, lend some relief;
To a heart who by sad right of sin
Could prove the whole sum (too sure) due to him.
By all those stings
Of Love, sweet-bitter things,
Which these torn hands transcribed on thy true heart;
O teach mine, too, the art
To study Him so, till we mix
Wounds, and become one crucifix."
(CRASHAW. *Sancta Maria Dolorum.*)

Who plunged in the heart of Mary those seven swords? Alas, I did it, when by my sins I caused the passion and death of her Divine Son. My pride, covetousness, lust, jealousy, gluttony, anger and sloth have been so many swords. They killed the Son and tortured the Mother who was not allowed to die, but was made to suffer beyond all that can be imagined.

O Mary, my Mother: I am sorry!

PART III

MIGHTY SEQUELS TO THE EARTHLY LIFE AND DEATH OF OUR LORD

MIGHTY SEQUELS

CHAPTER XXVI

The Link and the Transition

BY his wonderful life and sacred passion and death on the Cross, Our Lord laid up an absolutely infinite treasure of merits. Out of this inexhaustible fund there accrued first, to His Sacred Humanity the glory of His Resurrection, of His Ascension, of His Enthronement at the right hand of the Father in heaven, and of His sending down the Holy Ghost upon the beginnings of His Church on the day of Pentecost. .Then followed an efflorescence of Him, if we may so speak, into a marvellous multiplicity of presence and life and activities.

Whereas, till then, He had been present, by the bodily presence of His Sacred Humanity in only one spot at a time, namely where He happened to be seen; He is now, in that same Humanity of His, present, living and acting in a multitude of places at the same time. He is on the throne of His glory in heaven, and simultaneously here on earth in millions of places and milliards of consecrated particles and fragments of consecrated particles—of His full human and bodily (though non-spacial) presence—wherever the holy sacrifice of the Mass is being offered up, or the consecrated Host kept in the Tabernacle.

Moreover, Jesus is spiritually present and living and acting in His mystical body, the Church of the faithful, wherever found, on earth, in Purgatory and in Heaven; as the head is present

and united to its body, infusing life into all its members, giving unity to all its parts and presiding over all their several and varied activities. Particularly is He thus present in His Church on earth, for He said: *Behold I am with you all days to the consummation of the world* (Matt. xxviii, 20), and in each of His living members on earth; and He is actively engaged in the work of making them fruitful unto eternal life; for He said: *I am the vine, you the branches. He that abideth in me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit.* (John xv, 5.)

All this wonderful multiplicity, and exuberance and efflorescence of presence and life and supernatural activities are rendered possible only by the fact that Jesus is a divine Person; and it is the direct, immediate outcome of the infinite merits of His earthly life, and especially of His Sacred Person and death on the Cross.

We have in both Testaments several prophetic references to this wonderful new phase of the mystery of Our Lord, as well as indications of its strict connection with and dependence on His previous human life and death whilst He was on earth.

Isaias said: *If he shall lay down his life for sin, he shall see a long-lived seed. . . . Because his soul has laboured, he shall see and be filled. . . . Therefore will I distribute to him very many, and he shall divide the spoils of the strong, because he hath delivered his soul unto death.* (Is. liii, 10-12.)

Our Lord Himself said, speaking of His impending passion and of its bearing upon the vocation of the Gentiles: *Amen, amen, I say to you,*

unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. (John xii, 24-25.)

St. Paul says of the Saviour: *Being consummated, he became to all that obey him, the cause of eternal salvation.* (Heb. v, 9.) And again, speaking of God, he says: *Of him are you, in Christ Jesus, who, of God, is made unto us wisdom, and justice, and sanctification and redemption.* (1 Cor. i, 30.)

Isaias again, in his enumeration of the titles that will fit the Messias, says: *A child is born to us and a son is given to us, and the government is upon his shoulders: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of peace.* (Is. ix, 6.)

We now proceed to contemplate Our Lord in this new phase of His life. We shall see Him actively engaged in building up to Himself a mystical body, and bringing forth a new generation all His own, the Christian people, gathered from all the nations of the earth. *The government* is indeed *upon His shoulder* and He is a wise and loving *Counsellor* to each of those who belong to Him; and He is emphatically *the Father of the world to come,* since by all His activities He is preparing and bringing about the last stage of the world's history.

This fresh and intensely beautiful unfolding of the mystery of Jesus, runs from the day of Pentecost even till after the end of the present world and the Last Judgement. Only then will our Blessed Lord inaugurate the new era, final for all eternity.

CHAPTER XXVII

The Resurrection of Christ

WITH mere men, however great, or good, or gifted they may have been, death puts an end to all their activities here below. They have finished their task or left it unfinished, as the case may be, but they surely cannot add one more stroke to it. For weal or for woe, this is taken quite out of their hands. Not so with Our Lord.

It is quite true that for Him as for every one of us, there was a close to His earthly life. He Himself informs us of this. Before He gave sight to the man born blind, He remarked to His Apostles: *I must work the works of him that sent me, whilst it is day: the night cometh when no man can work* (John ix, 4), not even the Son of man. And on the cross, before giving up the ghost He proclaimed: *All is consummated.* (John xix, 30.)

So He will never again grow weary, as a pilgrim on earth: and He will suffer no more pain, either in His sacred flesh or in His human soul. He is now entered into His glorified state. *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into his glory?* (Luke xxiv, 26.) Thus He inquired of the two disciples of Emmaus. But now it remains for Him to reap the reward of His earthly life and death in this glorified state of His, and to unfold the immense benefits

accruing from the fulness of merits of this same life and death, to those whom He deigns to call His brethren: *I ascend to my Father and to your Father, to my God and to your God.* (John xx, 17.)

Apparently no human eye witnessed the actual event of the resurrection of Our Lord. It is left for our own imaginative faculty to represent to us the actual coming out of the Saviour of the world from His sealed sepulchre without removing the huge stone that stopped its entrance. The inspired historians give us not a single word about it. It seems to have been too august an event, as also the visit Our Lord paid first of all to His sweet Mother, the Virgin Mary, for any human writer to attempt to narrate.

Fortunately, the Evangelists are, we may almost say, profuse as well as irrefragable, in their setting forth of the evidence of this mighty event which St. Paul considers as the key-stone of the whole structure of our belief. The chief witness produced is the glorious Christ Himself: appearing, disappearing, entering the room while its doors remain closed; speaking to His friends with His wonted affectionateness and winsomeness, eating with them, offering Himself to be touched, to be handled by them, reproaching the slow to be convinced for their heaviness of heart; bestowing upon them tremendous spiritual powers.

The holy women, and among them conspicuously Mary Magdalen, these are the next witnesses. Then the Apostles. Then the very soldiers who had been set to mount guard over

the sepulchre, and had been paid by the princes of the priests and the Pharisees to try to mislead public opinion about the event: finally these worthies themselves, who paid the hush-money, so convinced were they of the truth of the resurrection.

Truly, never did any historical event come in the light of day with more glaring, incontrovertible evidence, for the edification and consolation of all men of good will. But this wonderful four-fold narrative must be read in the Gospel itself if we do not want to lose the aroma of simplicity, candour, human interest and divine condescension which exhales from it.

With Jesus Christ risen from the dead, the mystery of our salvation enters into a new phase.

This great mystery went on developing ever since the angel's Annunciation to Mary, or rather since Mary's Immaculate Conception, or better still, since the promise of Redemption to our first parents; or quite finally, ever since the counsel of the three Divine Persons from the eternal ages, where all was foreseen, fixed, decreed for our creation and our redemption.

Majestically at first, slowly to our thinking, God unfolded His grand design of the world's salvation by His Son Jesus Christ; but towards the end events moved almost precipitately.

Within thirty-three brief years the Son of God was bestowed upon Mary, was made flesh in her chaste bosom, was withdrawn from that white cloud, shown to the world, given to the world. He dwelt among us, one of us, *full of grace and truth* (John i, 14), *conversing with men* (Bar.

iii, 38), *asking them questions and giving them replies* (Luke ii, 46), but most frequently during the first thirty years, instructing us chiefly by His silence, by His humble work and by His obedience to Mary and Joseph. Then in the last three years He shone forth with such an intensity of light by His discourses, miracles and virtues, that all souls of good will in Israel recognized Him, hailed and adored Him as the true Son of God, whilst those with *sore eyes* hated and cursed His light, and desired to quench it wholly and for ever in the blood and mire, in the ignominies and fierce sufferings of His Passion. They could not see that, in thus ministering to their own hatred, they were ministering also to His Love; they could not perceive that in immolating this spotless Lamb they were accomplishing the great sacrifice and all the prophecies, and that they themselves with their own sacrilegious hands were turning over the page in the book of God's great work—they were turning it over to the page of the Resurrection.

But a few days after comes His glorious Ascension. And after ten more days comes the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles. We may then say that the first volume of God's great works is closed. Another begins from that time, at the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles: the volume of the life of the Church, or of the life of Jesus Christ in the Church Militant—a volume continuing its story until the end of the world, the Resurrection of the Dead, and the General Judgement. *Christus heri et hodie, ipse et in saecula. Heri, yesterday,*

was as far as Pentecost; *hodie, to-day,* is as far as the end of the world, and they are nothing more than the preliminaries, the preface, so to speak, of the great Poem of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ risen, and finally triumphant in His mystical body, *world without end, in saecula.*

His Resurrection on the third day after His death upon the cross is the pledge of the supreme triumph yet to come.

Let me read again in the Gospels the account of the Resurrection of my dear Saviour, and His various apparitions on this and the following day. On every page of the Gospel narratives, what a honey-comb for the soul, after the milk of Our Lord's preaching, and the generous wine of His dolorous Passion! How we should feed and feast on all this part of the Gospel revelation, and never grow weary of it. *Eat, O friends, and drink, and be inebriated, my dearly beloved.* (Cant. v, 1.)

I rise, then, on the great morning—even I—the third day after the Passion, and humbly—without inquiring whether I am worthy or not—I accompany the holy women who are going to the sepulchre.

They speak only of Him—but with what eloquence, with what flames of love! Ah! He is not dead in those hearts! There, at least, He will live until their last throb.

They follow the way of sorrows without stopping, hastening on, as much as their burden and the nature of the unequal and hilly ground allow them, and they call to mind each detail of His sorrowful progress. Here He fell; there He met

His Mother; further on He spoke to themselves, yet a little further, He fell a second and a third time.

Walking up to Calvary, they notice the three crosses, which stood out boldly against the blue of the sky, illumined by the first rays of the rising sun.

They question one another as to how to enter the sepulchre, and how to roll away the great rock, round as a mill-stone, which blocked the entrance.

Here let us leave the account to the sacred historian, or rather to the Holy Spirit. Let us listen in silence, and from the depth of our hearts and with our whole being let us worship.

Let us worship the risen Christ: Let us worship the very prints of His footsteps: *vestigia pedum suorum.* (Is. lx, 14.)

CHAPTER XXVIII

Our Lord's Ascension

IT seems likely that Our risen Lord, as the time for His ascension drew near, had the sweet humility to pray for the glory which had been prepared for Him: *Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son.* (John xvii, 1.)

The most gentle heart of Mary, notwithstanding the pain of the impending separation, made an echo to this beautiful prayer. She herself also repeated it: "Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, and mine; give to this dear and adorable Son the glory He has so well deserved."

It is thus that these two united in a melody which enchanted the angels and the eternal Father. And we cannot but think also that from the height of heaven, from His sublime throne, the eternal Father replied: *I have already glorified thee,* My dear Son, *and I will glorify thee again.* (John xii, 28.) Before Thine Incarnation Thou didst enjoy in My paternal bosom, all My glory, and now that Thou hast assumed human nature, and art bringing it into heaven, it is My will that it should be there invested with the fulness of My divine glory.

The whole of the celestial court kept silence in order to hearken to this wonderful divine concert.

I myself, O my dear heavenly Father, Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, God of everlasting

glory—I, too, *dust and ashes as I am,* prostrate, engulfed in my own nothingness, before the throne of Thine infinite majesty, I venture to join my unworthy voice to those of Jesus and Mary, and to entreat Thee for the same end: *Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy divine Son.*

I transport myself in spirit to that time, and I desire and I beg and pray for the Ascension of Our Lord, and all the glory that is to follow it.

The Ascension is the feast of the human body and soul of Jesus, glorified, uplifted, borne onwards and enthroned *where he was before* (John vi, 63)—*at the right hand of his Father* (Ps. cix, 1) in glory and *set over all the works of his hands.* (Ps. viii, 7.)

This statement is soon made, but there was some ceremonial used in the celebration of so great an event, as we may gather from various prophetic passages of Holy Scriptures which refer to it. We can do no better, if we want to have our share of this great joy, than try somehow to reconstitute Our Lord's wonderful progress in his ascent from earth to heaven.

Hardly had Jesus disappeared behind the cloud which hid Him from the eyes of His Apostles, than He put on the crown of gold and precious stones, the flowing robes of purple, that is to say the resplendence of divine sweetness and sanctity and majesty which are His by right, but which mortals on earth could not have borne to gaze upon.

There He is met by the glorious phalanx of the saints He has set free from Limbo, conspicu-

ous among whom are Adam, Abel, Noe, Abraham, Isaac, Moses, David, the Prophets, St. Joseph, St. John the Baptist, the Holy Innocents, and the Good Thief. Oh! how joyously they greet Him and adore Him. Then they fall into ranks, forming a glorious procession, singing the while as they go through space after Him, through the world of stars, getting nearer and nearer to the heavenly Jerusalem.

What do they sing? Of course the praises of their Lord and Captain; in such strains as these: *Thou, O Christ, art beautiful among the sons of men; grace is poured abroad on thy lips: Therefore hath God blessed thee for ever.*

Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, thou most mighty. With thy comeliness and thy beauty set out, proceed prosperously and reign. Because of truth, and meekness and justice, thy right hand shall conduct thee wonderfully.

Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever. The sceptre of thy Kingdom is a sceptre of uprightness.

Thou hast loved justice and hated iniquity, therefore hath God, thy God, anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

Myrrh and stacte and cassia perfume thy garments, from the ivory houses. (Ps. xliv, 3-9.)

So they sing, now in alternate choirs, now in most marvellous Gregorian unison, then again in a most wonderful polyphony. So they sing until for the first time, they catch a glimpse of the City of Light, looming up in the distance, with its high battlements of rubies and topazes, of sapphires and sardonyx, crowded and crowned with innumerable hosts of shining angels, and

are awed into silence at the sight. Then, strains of angelic music float down to them, mellowed by the distance, but growing in melodious intensity as they wing their flight still nearer and nearer.

There they are at last, before those marvellous gates of heaven which have been, since the sin of the first Adam, divinely closed, barred and bolted, against the whole human race.

And now takes place on the part of the angels that ceremonious challenge to their King, referred to in Psalm xxiii. In a burst of holy impatience, the company of saints escorting Our Lord cry out with one voice: *Lift up your gates, O you princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of glory shall enter in.*

All the Angels from inside ask with one voice: *Who is the King of glory?* The reply is given:

The Lord who is strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your gates, ye princes and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of glory shall enter in.

Who is this King of glory?

The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory.

As soon as Jesus, with divine majesty and sweetness, merely touches the wonderful gates, they fly open, revolving on their eternal hinges with a melodious sound, and forthwith the nine choirs of the blessed angels swarm out of heaven, to meet their King and give Him His first welcome.

Then with shouts of joy angels and saints mingle for a few moments in delightful confusion, embracing each other and congratulating

each other upon the great event of the reopening of the gates of heaven. Oh, what throngs will pass through them afterwards, as centuries succeed centuries in the Christian era!

But now all those happy children of God form their ranks and tread their way through the golden, resonant streets of the heavenly Jerusalem, and lead our Jesus, their King, up to the foot of the refulgent mountain of the Holy Trinity. They stop there, even as the Israelites in the desert, at the foot of Sinai; but unlike the servile Israelites, not in abject fear, not hiding their faces in the dust, but with faces upturned in an ecstacy of loving adoration, repeating again and again with increasing enthusiasm:

Oh! clap your hands, all ye nations; shout unto God with joy . . . God is ascended with jubilee, and the Lord with the sound of the trumpets. Sing praises to our God, sing ye; sing praises to our King, sing ye. Sing ye wisely: God sitteth on his holy throne. (Ps. xlvi.)

There is a pause, and then a duet: King David and one of the mighty Cherubim lift up their voices, singing this verse: *This is God, our God unto eternity and for ever and ever; he shall rule us for evermore.* (Ps. xlvii, 15.)

Then a schola of Seraphim, true birds of Paradise, with sweetest voices trill: *Thou hast loved justice and hated iniquity, therefore hath God thy God, anointed thee with the oil of gladness.* (Ps. lxiv, 8.) After which the whole congregation of these happy blessed children of God break forth into this sublime canticle:

The God of gods, the Lord hath spoken, and he hath called the earth . . . God shall come

manifestly; our God shall come and not keep silence. A fire shall burn before him. He shall call heaven from above, and the earth, to judge his people.

Gather ye together his saints to him, who set his covenant before sacrifice, and the heavens shall declare his justice: for God is judge.

Again a pause and a silence more impressive than the first and then, from his high throne of glory, in a sweet and mighty voice as of many thunders, at which the very gates of heaven are thrilled and tremble, Jesus lets fall these words:

Hear, O my people and I will speak: O Israel I will testify to thee; I AM GOD, THY GOD.

But this heavenly liturgy is really too grand for us to tell of. Dear Lord and Saviour, mayest thou give us such foretaste of it as we can bear! May we, as little dogs under their master's table, gather some of the crumbs that fall from the feast spread out before Thy blessed ones who are Thy servants and our elder brothers!

CHAPTER XXIX

Christ in Glory

WE are not left to our own devices to represent to ourselves the life of Our Lord in glory. It is in some way described and celebrated in many prophetical utterances of the Old Testament, particularly in Psalms ii and ix—then, profusely, in St. Paul's epistles—and finally most magnificently in the Apocalypse.

We are thus given a vivid description of the ineffable glory with which God the Father is rewarding the labours and sufferings Our Lord endured in his Sacred Humanity whilst on earth; of the wonderful praise and homage Jesus is constantly receiving from all the blessed angels and the saints already in paradise; of His taking in hand the government of the whole world and judging in particular judgement the souls of men as they go out of the present life and come to His tribunal in their hundreds of thousands; of His loving care for both the militant and suffering Churches; and of His soon bringing about the consummation of all things.

The fervent Christian cannot wish for anything better than these inspired pages to help him in the loving contemplation of his Lord in glory. We here subjoin them without any comment of our own. The Holy Spirit, if you but

listen to Him in the secret of your heart, will comment them for you.

PSALM II.

Why have the Gentiles raged, and the people devised vain things? The Kings of the earth stood up, and the princes met together, against the Lord and against his Christ (saying): *Let us break their bonds asunder, and let us cast away their yoke from us.*

He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh at them, and the Lord shall deride them. Then shall he speak to them in his anger, and trouble them in his rage.

But I AM APPOINTED KING BY HIM *over Sion, his holy mountain, preaching his commandment. The Lord hath said to me: Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee the Gentiles for thy inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt rule them with a rod of iron, and shalt break them in pieces like a potter's vessel.*

PSALM CIX.

The Lord said to my Lord: Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thy enemies thy footstool. The Lord will send forth the sceptre of thy power out of Sion: rule thou in the midst of thy enemies.

With thee is the principality in the day of thy strength. In the brightness of the saints, from the womb, before the day-star I begot thee. The Lord hath sworn, and he will not repent: Thou art a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech.

The Lord at thy right hand hath broken Kings in the day of his wrath. He shall judge among nations; he shall crush the heads in the land of many. He shall drink of the torrent in the way, therefore shall he lift up the head.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

But he (Stephen) *being full of the Holy Ghost, looking up steadfastly to heaven, saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. And he said: Behold I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.* (Acts vii, 55.)

SAINT PAUL.

(Heb. i, 1-3.) *God, who, at sundry times and in divers manners, spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all in these days, hath spoken to us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the world. Who being the brightness of his glory, and the figure of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, making purgation of sins,* SITTETH ON THE RIGHT HAND OF THE MAJESTY ON HIGH.

(Heb. ix, 11-12.) *Christ being come an high priest of the good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation* (by his divine personality of the eternal Son of the living God): *neither by the blood of goats or of calves, but by his own blood, entered once into the Holies, having obtained* (for us) *eternal redemption. And therefore he is the mediator of the New Testament. For Jesus is not entered into the Holies made with hands, the patterns of the true,*

but into heaven itself THAT HE MAY APPEAR NOW IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD FOR US.

(Eph. 1, 20-23.) *Setting Him on His right hand in the heavenly places, above all principality and power, and virtue, and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this world but also in that which is to come.* AND HE HATH SUBJECTED ALL THINGS UNDER HIS FEET, AND HATH MADE HIM HEAD OVER ALL THE CHURCH *which is his body and the fulness of him, who is filled all in all.*

THE APOCALYPSE.

(Chap. i, 19-26.)—*I, John, your brother. . . . I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and I saw seven candlesticks, and in the midst of the seven candlesticks, one like to the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to his feet, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hair were white as white wool and as snow, and his eyes were as a flame of fire, and his feet like unto fine brass, as in a burning furnace, and his voice like the sound of many waters. He had in his right hand seven stars. From his mouth came out a sharp two-edged sword. His face was as the sun shining in his power.*

Chapter v, 1-14.

And I saw, in the right hand of him that sat on the throne, a book, written within and without, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel, proclaiming with a loud voice: Who is worthy to open the book and to loose the seals thereof? And no man was able, neither in heaven nor on earth nor under the earth, to open the book, nor to look on it. And I wept much,

because no man was found worthy to open the book, nor to see it. And one of the ancients said to me: Weep not: behold the lion of the tribe of Juda, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book and to loose the seven seals thereof.

And I saw: and behold in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the ancients, a Lamb standing, as it were slain, having seven horns and seven eyes which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne. And when he had opened the book, the four living creatures and the four-and-twenty ancients fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new canticle, saying:

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to take the book and to open the seals thereof: because thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God, in thy blood, out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation. And hast made us to our God a kingdom and priests. And we shall reign on the earth.

And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures and the ancients (and the number of them was thousands of thousands), saying with a loud voice: The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power and divinity and honour and glory and benediction. And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard all saying: To him that sitteth on

the throne and to the Lamb, benediction and honour and glory and power, for ever and ever. And the four living creatures said: Amen. And the four-and-twenty ancients fell down on their faces and adored him that liveth for ever and ever.

Chapter vii, 9-17.

After this, I saw a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and in sight of the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. And they cried with a loud voice, saying: Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb.

And all the angels stood round about the throne, and the ancients, and the four living creatures. And they fell down before the throne upon their faces and adored God, saying: Amen. Benediction and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving, honour and power and strength, to our God, for ever and ever. Amen.

And one of the ancients answered and said to me: These that are clothed in white robes, who are they? And whence came they? And I said to him: My Lord, thou knowest. And he said to me: These are they who are come out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, they are before the throne of God: and they serve him day and night in his temple. And he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell over them. They shall no more hunger nor thirst: neither shall the sun fall on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the

midst of the throne, shall rule them, and shall lead them to the fountains of the waters of life: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Chapter xi, 15-17.

The seventh angel sounded the trumpet: and there were great voices in heaven, saying: The kingdom of this world is become our Lord's and his Christ's. And he shall reign for ever and ever. Amen. And the four-and-twenty ancients, who sit on their seats in the sight of God, fell on their faces and adored God, saying: We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, who art and who wast and who art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and thou hast reigned.

Chapter xii, 10-12.

And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying: Now is come salvation, and strength, and the Kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: because the accuser of our brethren is cast forth, who accused them before our God, day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of the testimony, and they loved not their lives unto death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you that dwell therein.

Chapter xiv, 1-5.

And I beheld: and lo a Lamb stood upon mount Sion, and with him an hundred and forty-four thousand, having his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the noise of many

waters and as the voice of great thunder. And the voice which I heard was as the voice of harpers, harping on their harps.

And they sung as it were a new canticle, before the throne and before the four living creatures and the ancients: and no man could say the canticle, but those hundred and forty-four thousand who were purchased from the earth. These are they who were not defiled with women: for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were purchased from among men, the firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth there was found no lie: for they are without spot before the throne of God.

Chapter xix, 1-16.

After these things, I heard as it were the voice of much people in heaven, saying: Alleluia. Salvation and glory and power is to our God. For true and just are his judgements, who hath judged the great harlot which corrupted the earth with her fornication, and hath revenged the blood of his servants at her hands. And again they said: Alleluia. And her smoke ascendeth for ever and ever.

And the four and-twenty ancients and the four living creatures fell down and adored God that sitteth upon the throne, saying: Amen. Alleluia. And a voice came out from the throne, saying: Give praise to our God, all ye his servants: and you that fear him, little and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of great thunders, saying: Alleluia: for the Lord our God, the Almighty,

hath reigned. Let us be glad and rejoice and give glory to him. For the marriage of the Lamb is come: and his wife hath prepared herself. And it is granted to her that she should clothe herself with fine linen, glittering and white. For the fine linen are the justifications of saints.

And he said to me: Write, Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith to me: These words of God are true. And I fell down before his feet, to adore him. And he saith to me: See thou do it not. I am thy fellow servant and of thy brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Adore God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

And I saw heaven opened: and behold a white horse. And he that sat upon him was called faithful and true: and with justice doth he judge and fight. And his eyes were as a flame of fire: and on his head were many diadems. And he had a name written, which no man knoweth but himself. And he was clothed with a garment sprinkled with blood. And his name is called: THE WORD OF GOD.

And the armies that are in heaven followed him on white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth proceedeth a sharp two-edged sword, that with it he may strike the nations. And he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God the Almighty. And he hath on his garment and on his thigh written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Chapter xx, 11-15.

And I saw a great white throne and one sitting upon it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away: and there was no place found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing in the presence of the throne.

And the books were opened: and another book was opened, which was the book of life. And the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it: and death and hell gave up their dead that were in them. And they were judged, every one according to their works.

And hell and death were cast into the pool of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the pool of fire.

Chapter xxii.

And he showed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street thereof, and on both sides of the river, was the tree of life, bearing twelve fruits, yielding its fruits every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

And there shall be no curse any more: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it. And his servants shall serve him. And they shall see his face: and his name shall be on their foreheads, and night shall be no more. And they shall not need the light of the lamp, nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall enlighten them. And they shall reign for ever and ever.

And he said to me: These words are most faithful and true. And the Lord God of the spirits of the prophets sent his angel to show his servant the things which must be done shortly. And: Behold I come quickly. Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book.

And I, John, who have heard and seen these things. And, after I had heard and seen, I fell down to adore before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. And he said to me: See thou do it not. For I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets and of them that keep the words of the prophecy of this book, Adore God.

And he saith to me: Seal not the words of the prophecy of this book. For the time is at hand. He that hurteth, let him hurt still: and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is just, let him be justified still: and he that is holy, let him be sanctified still. Behold, I come quickly: and my reward is with me, to render to every man according to his works. I am Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. Blessed are they that wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb: that they may have a right to the tree of life and may enter in by the gates into the city. Without are dogs and sorcerers and unchaste and murderers and servers of idols and every one that loveth and maketh a lie.

I, Jesus, have sent my angel, to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the root and stock of David, the bright and morning star. And the spirit and the bride say: Come. And he that heareth, let him say: Come. And he that

thirsteth, let him come. And he that will, let him take the water of life, freely. For I testify to everyone that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book: If any man shall add to these things, God shall add unto him the plagues written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from these things that are written in this book. He that giveth testimony of these things, saith: Surely, I come quickly: Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

My soul, let us go repeating:
LAUS TIBI DOMINE, REX AETERNAE GLORIAE!

CHAPTER XXX

Christ in the Church

SO then, Christ Jesus, our Lord risen from the dead is henceforth reigning in heaven, gloriously seated at the right hand of His Father, filling the blessed angels and saints with ineffable bliss, and, together with them all, offering to the majesty of the ever Blessed Trinity the most perfect praise. He is also administering particular judgement (in what mysterious way we know not) to all the souls both living and dead, which are incessantly brought to Him in their thousands and millions, from this earth of ours, where they parted from their bodies, their time of trial being over.

At the same time Christ is also upon earth in the midst of His Militant Church, multiplying His presence and His activities in a wonderful way. The book of Proverbs had prophetically said of Him: *Wisdom hath built herself a house. She hath hewn her out seven pillars, she hath slain her victims, mingled her wine and set forth her table. She hath sent her maids to invite to the tower and to the walls of the city: Whosoever is a little one, let him come to me; and to the unwise she said: Come, eat my bread and drink the wine, which I have mingled for you.* (Prov. ix, 1-5.) How transparently clear is the meaning of this prophecy! The *house* is the Church on earth, the *builder* is Christ, who

is *the power of God and the wisdom of God.* (1 Cor. i, 24.) The *seven pillars* are the seven sacraments, *hewn out* of the infinite merits of His sacred Passion. *The victims* (in the plural) are so many simultaneous productions of His own flesh and blood on our altars, wherever the holy sacrifice of the Mass is being offered up. The *little ones* are those whose faith is as simple as that of a child. The *unwise* (according to the world) are those who put spiritual things above temporal advantages. The *bread* and *wine* are holy communion.

The Church is the mystical body of Christ, into which He breathed His own life and through which He continues all the various activities of His former life and passion and death whilst He was on earth.

The Church is purely and simply a sprouting out from the open side of Jesus dead on the cross; an extension or continuation of Him, a branching out of His own Sacred Humanity. *I am the vine,* He says, *you the branches: he that abideth in me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit, for without me you can do nothing.* (John xv, 5.) There is an irruption of His own divine life and of the grace of His Sacred Humanity into that group of men, into that little flock (Luke xii, 32) of those He calls *His friends.* (John xv, 14.) Little, indeed, in comparison with the immense number of men who do not walk with Him. But those who do, Jesus assumes them unto Himself and is fulfilled in them. They are His Church.

All men are Christ's by right. They belong to Him in the most absolute manner. He is

their maker. After they had been sold to the devil by the sin of Adam (Rom. vii, 14), He bought them *at a great price* (1 Cor. vi, 20) paying their ransom with His own most precious blood. By His Incarnation He has become the head of the whole human race. It is the most ardent wish of His heart to win them all over to His love, to make them even now as holy and as happy as it is possible to be on earth, and finally to lead them all as His conquest, His trophy, to His heavenly Father, and make of them all, together with His blessed angels, the Church triumphant, the Bride elect of His love. But it is in the power of men to refuse to avail themselves of such a plentiful redemption: and, unfortunately, being free, too many do so. As we see, it is through no lack of goodwill on the part of Our Lord that He does not assume unto Himself the whole human race.

Before going up to heaven, Jesus said to His Apostles whilst blessing them: *Behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world.* (Matt. xxviii, 20.) It may be asked: What kind of presence does Jesus mean in these words? Does He mean His own real bodily, though non-spacial, presence in the Blessed Sacrament? He means this and something more: for His eucharistic presence does not explain all His activities on behalf of the Church. We must understand it as a spiritual presence of love, distinct both from the eucharistic presence under the Sacred Species, and from His divine metaphysical omnipresence which is necessarily implied in all created things, animate or inanimate, good or bad. Jesus is in His Church on earth

with that sort of presence by which the head is united to the body, attends to the welfare of all its parts, keeps them together in one, pours out the stream of life into them and presides over all their operations.

Through His Church Our Lord Jesus Christ continues on earth till the end of the world the mysteries of His own hidden life, of His public apostolate, of His passion and death. In the persons of little Christian children He still *waxes strong, full of wisdom and the grace of God is in him . . . and he is still subject to his parents.* (Luke ii, 40-51.) In the persons of pious youths preparing themselves long beforehand for the holy priesthood or a life of virginity in some religious order, He asks wise questions from the doctors of the Law and takes in hand His Father's business. In the persons of the immense majority of His faithful, He earns His bread by the sweat of His brow, by the work of His hands, in the different avocations which divide the world of toilers, adoring and praising His heavenly Father the while. In the persons of apostolic men He continues to be the *Light of the world,* by word of mouth as well as by books full of the spirit of His Gospel.

When the priest preaches, it is Jesus who preaches; so much so that He has said to His apostles and their successors: *He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth me.* (Luke x, 16.) When the priest baptizes it is Jesus who takes away the stain of original sin and fills the soul with grace. The priest absolves, it is Jesus who cleanses the repentant sinner in His own blood. When the

priest celebrates holy Mass, Jesus is the principal celebrant as well as the victim of this sacrifice. When the bishop confirms, it is Jesus who pours out the Holy Ghost with the fulness of His gifts into the soul. When the bishop ordains priests, it is Jesus who marks their soul with the indelible sign of His own priesthood and invests them with more than earthly powers. When the Pope governs the Church, names the bishops and assigns their dioceses to them, presides over the whole world's apostolate, renders his decisions *ex cathedra*, convokes, suspends, prorogues, terminates Ecumenical Councils: Christ is with him, doing all these things, assisting him with His own divine light and strength.

Christ it is who does it all through the instrumentality of His faithful servants. He has need of us: (Oh! what divine condescension there is in this!) We lend Him our mind, our will, our hands, our lips for the performance of these supernatural works. All is done in His name, for His sake, with His authority, by the might of His grace, by the virtue which flows from His earthly life and passion, by the application of His infinite merits; by Him, by Him in very deed.

Jesus pursues His life of divine contemplation and divine praise on earth, and His benefactions on souls and bodies in the works of mercy, principally through that admirable multitude and variety of Religious Orders of both sexes, which are the glory of the Church. Finally Our Lord continues His Sacred Passion not only by the sacrifice of the Mass but also in the persons of His martyrs, and of all generous Christians

who endure patiently and lovingly the severest trials, and more particularly in the persecutions with which His Church, considered as a corporate body, is incessantly assailed.

To this new dolorous passion, Judases have never been wanting. To speak only of modern times, there have been Voltaire with all his following, then Renan, and now the Modernists. In comparison with Voltaire and Renan, the Judas who betrayed Jesus with a kiss was almost a gentleman: he showed at least some sense of the horror of his crime. As for the Modernists, with all their self-conceit and arrogance, they are only the train-bearers of that honey-tongued caitiff, Renan. Flunkeys of the devil, all of them.

Meanwhile, for the last half-century, Christ in the person of His Vicar upon earth, has been a prisoner in the Vatican, an object of mockery and insult to the rabble of the world.

But in spite of all persecutions, *the stream of the river* of divine grace *maketh the city of God joyful. The Most High hath sanctified his own tabernacle. God is in the midst thereof: it shall not be moved. God will help it in the morning early* (Ps. xlvi, 5-6). The Catholic Church is *from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof, the loveliness of his beauty* (Is. xlix, 1-2).

Balaam, from the summit of the Phogor, where he could see the camp of the People of God pitched in the desert, exclaims: *How beautiful are thy tabernacles, O Jacob, and thy tents, O Israel! As woody valleys, as watered gardens near the rivers, as tabernacles which the Lord hath pitched, as cedars by the water-side . . .*

God hath brought him out of the land of Egypt. Lying down he hath slept like a lion, and as a lioness whom none shall dare to rouse. He that blesseth thee shall also be blessed, he that curseth thee shall be reckoned among the accursed. . . . Israel shall do manfully. . . . Who shall live when God shall do these things? (Num. xxiv, 5-23.) Balaam had begun by speaking of the Israelites, whose camp stretched far and wide at the foot of the mountain, but he ends by singing the glories of the Church of Christ, which he descries through a vista of fifteen centuries yet to come. Well might he utter his wistful query: "Who shall live when God shall do these things?"

This, then, is our privilege. We see the fulfilment of this as well as of all the other prophecies relating to Christ and to His Church upon earth. For well nigh two thousand years, she has been passing through ordeals from without and from within, which no merely human society could have withstood. To-day, in the midst of a decrepit world, of the ruins of revolutions, of crumbling thrones and a tottering social order, the Church of Christ, the Catholic Church, stands as full of vitality as ever, with the same holy sacrifice of the Mass, the same seven Sacraments, the same hierarchy and the same Credo as in the thirteenth century, as in the sixth, as in the first, as on the day of Pentecost.

Christ's doing!

To Him be glory and love for ever!

CHAPTER XXXI

Christ in the Holy Eucharist

"What is the good thing of him, and what is his beautiful thing but the corn of the elect and wine springing forth virgins?" (Zach. ix, 17).

IN the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, Our Lord lives a very active, mysterious life, and performs several distinct functions of mighty import. There is first His mystical sacrifice of the Mass; then His giving us His body and blood to be the spiritual food of our souls; finally there is His abiding real presence. We must try and realize all that each of these functions of Our Lord implies; then perhaps we shall be better able to appreciate the extent of His love for us.

St. John the Evangelist introduces his account of the Last Supper with these words: *Jesus having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them unto the end.* (John xiii, 1.) *Unto the end,* here does not mean only unto the end of His life, but unto the end of instituting so marvellous a sacrament, and securing its permanence till the end of the world, by means of the sacrament of Holy Orders. Our Lord Jesus Christ, in His Holy Eucharist, makes Himself at the same time our oblation to the Father, the food of our hungry soul, the

memorial or synthesis of all His other mysteries, and our viaticum when the moment comes for us to pass from this world into that of the blessed spirits.

Let us now consider the activities of Our Lord in the holy sacrifice of the Mass. There is first of all His mystical *birth and oblation* of Himself at each of the two consecrations. Then there is His mystical *immolation and death* as soon as the two elements of the sacrifice are at the same time present separately on the altar, namely: His Flesh under the species of bread, on the one hand; His Blood under the species of wine, on the other. The communion of the priest and of the faithful constitutes the formal *consummation of this sacrifice* of the New Law.

The holy sacrifice of the Mass is first and foremost an extension of the sacrifice of Calvary and an application of its merits to individual persons or particular cases. On Calvary, the main feature of the sacrifice was its being offered up for the expiation of sin, to redeem a guilty world: everything else seems to recede from view before this one great aim, and to give to this sacrifice its formidable aspect: whilst, on the contrary in the sacrifice of the Mass, everything speaks to us of peace and reconciliation. Hence we are able to discern more plainly, in the Mass, the four ends of the sacrifice, which are: adoration of the Divine Majesty; thanksgiving for all benefits received; propitiation for our sins and those of the whole world; and petition for all the temporal and spiritual blessings we stand in need of.

Can we thank Our Lord enough, and admire

Him enough, for thus making Himself, in the trembling fingers of His priest, our living prayer, sure to be well received by the Father? Were any man to offer up his whole being, body and soul, intellect and will and senses, the whole tree, root and stock and branch, to the Father, this would constitute an act of adoration, but a very paltry, insignificant one, quite unworthy of the Infinite Majesty. But, thanks to the loving-kindness of Our Lord, we have better than this at our command: we have Himself; and to this Lamb of God we may now add the oblation of our own puny self: it will not be any longer insignificant.

Several other features of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass deserve to be noticed.

First its universality. The celebration of Mass is constantly taking place, at every hour of the day and night, all over the world, on many altars at the same time, thus giving a splendid fulfilment to the prophecy of Malachy: *From the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice and there is offered up to my name a clean oblation.* (Mal. i, 11.) To speak in a human way, what activities on the part of Our Lord this reveals to us! None but a divine person could be equal to them. Does not this demonstrate to what an extent the Sacred Humanity of Our Lord comes through the hypostatic union into a share of the infinitude of His Godhead? He is God; He is God in His human body and soul; *In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead corporally.* (Col. ii, 9.) That is the all-sufficing explanation of the

mystery of His corporal presence and activities in so many places at the same time.

But the wonder becomes still greater when we consider another feature of the life of Our Lord in the holy sacrifice of the Mass; I mean the decided character of intimate intercourse and personal mutual possession between Jesus and the priest who celebrates, as well as between the same Jesus and him who offered the stipendium of the Mass, and again between the same Lord Jesus and each one of those who piously assist at the Mass. Each one of them can say with absolute truth and in the most literal meaning: *My Beloved to me and I to him.* (Cant. ii, 16.)

This special character of possession and of intimate intercourse and delightful private friendship is still more palpable in the act of sacramental Communion, which is the natural outcome of Mass. Jesus comes to me, then, as though there were no one else to be loved by Him but my poor self; as though there were in the whole wide world but these two, Jesus and I. He acts upon me and in me with His whole self and He expects me to be responsive to the full extent of my complex nature made up of spirit and flesh. What an endearing familiarity is this! What a loving embrace! What a bridal kiss! And what a heart to heart communion and effusion of love this ought to call forth on our part!

After such a visit of Our Lord to each one of the communicants personally, and knowing as we do that it is His most ardent wish to be so received by every one, no man has a right to

say: "Oh! I am a nobody. I am lost in the crowd. God does not care for me, except in a general way." Each one is assured that he is held in particular regard by Our Lord, that he is dearly loved by the Son of God, individually and for his own sake. If Moses could exclaim in the name of his people: *There is not any other nation so great, that hath gods so nigh them as our God is present to all our petitions* (Deut. iv, 7), what shall we say on receiving holy communion? But again, what a revelation is thus given of the wonderful activities of our Jesus in His blessed Sacrament! What He does to me, He does at the same time to hundreds and thousands, perhaps millions, of other communicants: so true it is that any number of created beings never could exhaust the powers of a divine person.

In connection with holy communion, there is a last feature of the activities of Our Lord in His Blessed Sacrament which ought to fill us with overflowing tenderness and gratitude: it is His holding Himself in readiness to be carried to the sick and administered as *viaticúm* to the dying. So He will come to me at the solemn moment when I am about to pass from this world of shadows and enigmas to the splendid eternal light of the world of the blessed spirits.

Finally, there is the persevering real presence of Our Lord in the Tabernacle, and this reveals new activities on the part of Our Lord and still greater abysses of His loving-kindness in our behalf.

Because Holy Mass lasts but a short half-hour, and Holy Communion but a few entrancing

minutes, our dear Emmanuel chooses to recede no farther away from us than behind the little golden door of the tabernacle. There He stands, waiting and watching for every man to draw nigh to Him, and unburden his weary soul, vexed by many temptations. *Come to me,* He says, *all ye that labour and are burdened and I will refresh you.* (Matt. xi, 28.) What joy to Him when He sees one of us coming to pay Him a surprise visit of love, be it of ever so short a duration! Some of the saints who received His confidences when they were still on earth, tell us how He decks Himself, in a manner, with the marks we give Him of our loving regard, and shows them forth with a sort of proud ostentation, in the sight of His angels and of His Eternal Father.

One of the Prophets makes Our Lord say of the stigmata of His Sacred Passion: *With these I was wounded in the house of them that love me* (Zach. xiii, 6); now He rings a change on these words, and speaking of the tokens of love He receives from us, He exclaims: " With these I was adorned in the house of them that love Me." Thanks be to God, it is no longer in the power of anyone to inflict on Our Lord bodily pain or sadness of heart, because He is no longer in mortal life, a pilgrim like ourselves, but He is now in body and soul *in Patria;* but it is now more than ever in our power to add to the joy of His Heart and to His accidental glory, and therefore He says: *My delights are to be with the children of men* (Prov. viii, 31), and He proves it by thus staying day and night in our midst.

Our devotion to the Blessed Sacrament will gain in intensity if we realize that the Jesus who is there on our altars, in our tabernacles, is not a Jesus suffering, but glorified, whom consequently no pain of any kind can touch. Nor is He solitary, but surrounded with millions of adoring angels, if only we could see them. There are not two Jesuses, one enjoying the supremest bliss of heaven, the other suffering in the Blessed Sacrament; there is but one, the Jesus who arose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty: blissful wherever He multiplies His Sacramental Presence, blissful in all the depths of His Human Soul and Body and Sacred Heart, glorious for evermore; in fact the very King of everlasting glory.

This raises an interesting question. In some revelations of the saints, Our Lord is represented as asking consolation of His friends for the ingratitude of sinners and tepid Christians, as though He were really, even now, a prey to sadness. This must not be understood literally. The best explanation I can discover is that Our Lord has indeed, in very truth, suffered this sadness, at the time of His agony in the Garden, and that He is referring to this fact and not to any present sadness; and furthermore, that any consolation we, who are now living, do offer Him, has been in advance administered to Him in our name by the Angel of the Agony. Thus it is that everything revolves around the great drama of our redemption, and we are made in a manner the contemporaries of it. As I have endeavoured to show this at some length in my

volume on THE MYSTICAL LIFE, in the three chapters (xii-xiv) on the Pauline doctrine of the *Verbum crucis*, I beg to refer my kind reader to them.

It is of faith that Christ *risen from the dead, dieth now no more, death shall no more have dominion over him. For in that he died to sin, he dieth once: but in that he liveth he liveth unto God* (Rom. vi, 9-10), and therefore enjoys a happiness which is absolutely unassailable. We may well return thanks to the heavenly Father that it is so.

St. Thomas in the office of Corpus Christi warns us that in holy communion " a pledge of the glory to come is given us." Is not Jesus therein giving us His own glorified flesh to eat, His own glorified blood to drink? We eat of the glory of heaven, we drink of the glory of heaven. The very substance of the glory of heaven the Lamb of God, who is the very light of the Jerusalem that is above, is given us as the food of our soul. Something of the heavenly glory clings to the priest who is celebrating the Divine Mysteries, spreads to the faithful who assist at them, especially if they receive Holy Communion, and invests also the little altar boy, at times very inattentive and thoughtless, who serves the Mass.

All this of course is discernible only with the eyes of faith.

The contemplative Christian, with a heart all burning with love, exclaims: *Verily thou art a hidden God.* (Is. xlv, 15.) *Oh! how great is the multitude of thy sweetness, O Lord, which thou hast hidden for those who love thee!* (Ps.

xxx, 20.) *Thou hast prepared a table before me against them that afflict me . . . and my chalice which inebriateth, how goodly it is!* (Ps. xxii, 5.)

CHAPTER XXXII

Christ in me

IN the first years of my missionary life in North America, among the wild tribes of the Indian Territory, now the State of Oklahoma, I was in charge of the Sacred Heart Mission, and my dear parishioners were the Pottowatomie Redskins. In the school, besides their children, I had also some from the neighbouring tribes: ranging in age from six to seventeen. Some were Christians already, others were under instruction, and there were also those who became Catholics later in life, thanks to the good seed then implanted in them.

Among these children there was a bright little Chickasaw boy aged seven. I loved to question him because he used to give me rather unexpected replies. One day at catechism, I asked him: "Where is Jesus?" Promptly, with graceful gesture, he pointed to his breast and replied: "He is there in my heart." This he said, not parrot-like, but in a tone of voice which carried with it deep religious feeling; showing that the lesson taught him by the Sister of Mercy, had made on him more than a superficial impression.

Neither the child nor the humble nun could suspect that these few words of his had started in my mind a train of thought. I asked myself: "Is Jesus indeed in that little boy's heart? Is He really there? And how? Then He is also

verily in my own heart"; and I, a priest, was startled at the discovery. I had been, by means of that little innocent, brought face to face with a divine fact, the truth of which, until then, I had held only superficially, or as Newman would have expressed it "notionally," that is to say without a sense of its reality.

This happened a long while ago; somewhere between 1882 and 1885. I had entirely forgotten the incident, when, last year, one of my correspondents submitted to me for solution a difficulty which had arisen between her and another lady, a teacher.

The latter had asked a little child: "Where is Jesus?" to which the child had replied: "Jesus is everywhere." The teacher had taken exception at this and corrected the little one, saying: "No, Jesus is not everywhere: it is only God who is everywhere." These two well-meaning people had an argument about it, my friend maintaining that the child's answer, in its naked simplicity, was right, whilst the teacher still held, tooth and nail, that it was wrong.

Of course I had to adjudge that the child was absolutely right. Is not Jesus God and, therefore, everywhere? The teacher, hypnotized so to say, by the sight of the limitations of the Sacred Humanity as such, had failed to realize that the primary fact about Jesus is His Godhead. He is the second person of the Blessed Trinity, one and the same God with the Father and the Holy Ghost, therefore everywhere present. Emphatically, without the shadow of a restriction, we must say that Jesus is everywhere.

Now is this divine person, Jesus, who is the true and consubstantial and coequal Son of God, *everywhere with His human nature?* In other words, are the human soul and the human body of Our Lord everywhere, even as much as His Godhead? To this it is evident that we must give a decided negative. The human soul of Our Blessed Lord and the sacred body it animates cannot be everywhere present. This omnipresence of a created, finite thing, is what is called a metaphysical impossibility, absolute and irreducible.

To procure the real presence of His sacred body and blood and, by concomitance, the presence also of His human soul, in the Blessed Sacrament, in the way He does and in so many places at the same time, Our Lord has to use His divine omnipotence, setting at naught many laws of nature. This could be done, and therefore He did it, His wonderful love for us prompting Him thereto. But nothing further is possible. The attribute of Immensity on which hangs the property of being present everywhere is an exclusive and absolutely incommunicable perfection of the divine nature. The human nature of Our Lord by the fact that it is a thing created is simply incapable of this privilege.

Jesus is not merely the Sacred Humanity. Jesus is the Word, the second person of the Blessed Trinity. True, He is the Word made flesh, but that does not alter the case; the Godhead of the Word exceeds infinitely His Sacred Humanity.

There is but one Word of God, and that Word of God is Our Lord Jesus Christ. There are

not two Words, one in the flesh and another out of the flesh. Before the Incarnation took place there was no other Word but the one that was, in the fulness of time, to be made flesh; and since the august event of the Incarnation, there is no other Word than the Word made flesh. Wherever the Word is (and He is everywhere) He is the Word made flesh, the Word that has taken unto Himself a human body and a human soul, though He has not that human body and soul everywhere with Him, as such a thing is impossible.

Nor is this in the least necessary for our consolation.

Through His Godhead which is present everywhere we are in touch with His Sacred Humanity, even at times when we are far from the Blessed Sacrament. Everywhere therefore, and at all times, and under all circumstances we can, with the saintly Carmelite Brother Lawrence, feel very near indeed to Our Lord, and give pleasure to His Sacred human Heart by our acts of love.

Talk of wireless telegraphy! I say it with the utmost reverence: there is between the Sacred Humanity of Our Lord and each one of us, a most wonderful apparatus or medium of transmission of messages, even His own Godhead, present everywhere. Here, at this very moment, in my cell, whilst I am writing these lines, there is God, there is the most Holy Trinity, there is the second Person, the Word. But, is it not the same Word who became man, who assumed a human body and a human soul, nearly two thousand years ago, and who since

then has never stood apart from them? The very same. Therefore, wherever this human body and that human soul of His happen to be, the Word who is present here is at the same time hypostatically united with these, and whatever message of adoration and loving sympathy I wish to send to His Sacred Humanity is transmitted in the instant; as on the other hand, whatever influence of grace Our Lord wants to impress me with, is conveyed to me in a moment, by the same medium, straight from his sacred Heart. So that the fact of the Sacred Humanity not being bodily present everywhere does not in the least stand in the way of our perpetual contact and fellowship and intercourse of love with the same Sacred Humanity.

To return to our little Chickasaw boy, he certainly could say with absolute truth, that Jesus was there, in his heart. And it meant more than the metaphysical presence by which Our Lord, in his divine nature, is necessarily everywhere. Besides that sort of presence, He is also in the heart of every one who is free from sin: that is the special presence of love by which the three divine Persons dwell in the Christian. "*If any one love me,*" says Jesus, "*he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and will make our abode with him.*" (John xiv, 23.)

But that is not all. Jesus is moreover present in all good Christians by another still more special presence and mode of activity, namely as Head of the Church and therefore of everyone of its living members. *Abide in me and I in you, I am the vine you the branches.* (John xv, 4-5.)

In this last capacity of our Head, although Jesus is not in us with His body and blood and human soul, except during a few happy moments which follow Holy Communion, nevertheless He is incessantly pouring into us the influences of the grace which flow from His Sacred Humanity. Thus is Jesus present in me, acting in me, making me all His own, making use of me, for the purposes of His ineffable love.

This was in some sort rendered palpable to me, one day, in the joyful confidences of a young friend of mine. I hastened to put them on record whilst I was still under their charm. We shall call them:

The Youth's Dream.

"Father," he said, "you have no idea how happy I feel just now. Look at me, in my rags: I am rich and I am loved. Loved, tenderly loved, by many of the kindest and grandest people; cherished, desired, sought after, awaited with impatience in order to share their delightful life.

"Oh! what a lovely dream I have had!

"I dreamed that the great God of Heaven was my Father, and that He gave me the sweet name of son; that He took me upon His knees, caressing and embracing me, and pressing me to His heart, and then He set me on my feet, saying: 'Walk about a little while, and I will give Myself to thee for a reward, with all that belongs to Me. Then Jesus, in the form of a fine youth, took me by the hand, embraced me and said: 'Thou art My brother: let us walk together. I have always loved thee: I want

to lead thee Myself: thus we shall be sure that thou will not go astray.'

"He then began to talk to me of His sweet Mother Mary, and He told me the most wonderful things about her, and He added, 'I want her to be thy sweet Mother too. Call her Mother, and if at any time thou fearest any danger, cry out to her.' Having said this, Jesus disappeared. Then I immediately began to call out: 'Mary, Mary, mother of Jesus, mother mine!' and the Blessed Virgin hastened to me—oh! so beautiful, so smiling and kind! She imprinted a big kiss on my brow, murmuring as she did so: 'Poor child: have no fear; go forward; we love thee well, and we shall help thee. Behold at thy side the watchful guardian whom thy Heavenly Father, thy Brother Jesus and myself have deputed to keep thee.'

"I looked on my right, and I was quite dazzled. An angel of the Lord stood beside me in shining armour, looking at me with eyes of quite fraternal affection. He too kissed me and said: 'In the Kingdom of Light, of which thou art already a citizen, love is chaste, but it is very tender. There is no such thing there as hardness of heart or indifference. Thou wouldst be astonished were I able to make thee understand how all my brother-angels, and the saints in paradise wish thee well: how they all think of thee, speak of thee, cherish thee, blessing God for thy smallest advance in virtue, and await with impatience the day of thine entrance into heaven, that thou mayest make festival there with us.'

"I replied: 'O my dear guardian angel, can it really be that I am so greatly beloved? Who then has been able to direct thus the glances and the affections of all these dear Saints towards me?' He replied: 'Knowest thou not that all those whom God loves they love too! In thy soul they behold the image of God. In thy soul, in thy body, and in all thy human nature they behold not only the image of our Lord Jesus Christ, but His living member. They behold upon thy forehead the trace of the water of baptism, and of the redeeming blood, and even in thy senses and in thy flesh, the traces of several sacraments; above all of thy Communions. They cannot but love thee, and cherish thee tenderly.'

"At these last words I awoke, and my joy, till then overflowing, changed to a bitter sadness, and I began to weep because my beautiful dream had come to an end. Soon, however, a voice as it were behind me, uttered loudly and distinctly these words: 'Foolish one! Dost thou not understand that this is not a dream, but a great reality?' I had heard this voice some moments before in my dream: I recognized its tone and accent—it was that of my guardian angel, and he added, 'Thank God, Our Heavenly Father, humbly and joyfully. Go forward; work; practise faith, hope and charity and the spirit of prayer; and if at times thy courage appears on the point of giving way, place upon thy heart as a healing balm the recollection of this assurance of affections and of divine favours which visit thee from the height of heaven, coming down from the Father of Lights, through

the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, and all the glorious phalanx of Angels and Saints.'

"Then I said: 'O my dear Angel! I thank thee, I promise thee that I will be no longer sad; beloved as I am, it seems to me that it would be a sin,' and I began to shout aloud distractedly: 'I am loved! I am loved! I am loved! *Deus charitas est!* Love is in possession: love triumphs: love in God rejoices!'"

Thus far my young friend. This was a dream, a natural dream and nothing more. Certainly it was no vision and no revelation, but a real dream. What does it prove? This: that when one lives the supernatural life and allows it to have full sway, it even gets hold of the subconscious activities of our inferior powers and weaves itself beautifully into their ephemeral products. Several other examples, as striking as this one, have come under my observation.

. . . . .

What Jesus wants to do with me, and is actually engaged in carrying out, is no small undertaking. He wants to express Himself in me, through me, through my own idiosyncrasies. He takes me just as he finds me, a wretched sinner, wretched in body, wretched in mind, wretched in all the debilitated powers of my soul, and behold, He sets about to heal me, making me one with Himself, making me do His own works upon earth. *I must work the works of him that sent me, whilst it is day, the night cometh, when no man can work.* (John ix, 4.) I must whilst I am here below, even as He did, praise the Divine Majesty of our heavenly Father, show filial love to Mary, love

my brethren, go about doing good, take up my cross, climb my own little Calvary, suffer whatever there is to endure in union with Him in His Sacred Passion and for the dear intentions of His Sacred Heart. Here is divine life; here is divine fruitfulness: now that is what Jesus is achieving in His poor servant, if only I put no obstacle in the way.

As St. Paul expresses it, every individual Christian who is in earnest, can and ought to say: "*I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me.*" (Gal. ii, 20.)

CHAPTER XXXIII

My Blessings upon the dear Christ

I DARE to call Him " my Jesus," for is He not mine, and am I not His? He said to His Apostles at the Last Supper after He had given them communion with His own Flesh and Blood, *Remain in me, and I in you* (John xv, 4), and the spouse in the divine Canticle cries out in the exuberance of her heart's joy, *My well-beloved is mine and I am his.* (Cant. ii, 16.) Then I dare, in my turn, to speak of Him as being wholly mine, and I say:

Blessed for ever be my Jesus!

Blessed for ever be the Father of my Jesus with whom He is one and the same God!

Blessed for ever be the Holy Spirit of my Jesus, who is also Himself one and the same God with Jesus and His Divine Father!

Glory be to the Father, by the Son, in the Holy Spirit of love; glory! glory for ever!

Blessed for ever be the most sacred humanity of my Jesus! His Body, His Soul, His Heart, His Precious Blood: may they be blessed for ever!

Blessed for ever be the incomparable and most sweet, Immaculate Virgin Mother of my Jesus.

Blessed be the chaste womb that conceived, carried and ushered into the world my Jesus, the true Son of God!

And blessed be the virgin paps that gave Him suck. Blessed, blessed for ever!

Blessed for ever be the foster-father of my Jesus, the humble and all-glorious St. Joseph.

Blessed for ever be the most holy Forerunner of my Jesus, virgin, martyr, more than prophet, John the Baptist, *the friend of the Bridegroom!*

Blessed be all the mysteries of my Jesus!

Blessed be all the actions of my Jesus whilst He lived on earth, *full of grace and truth* (John i, 14), all His affections, all His wishes, all His words, all His miracles, all His fatigues, all His sufferings, all His humiliations, all His secret joys. May they all be blessed for ever!

Blessed be the holy Apostles of my Jesus, especially John the well-beloved, and Peter upon whom He founded His Church; and Paul, whom He called from the height of His glorious heaven to come after Him!

Blessed be all the holy ancestors of my Jesus, and the holy people of God in the Old Testament!

Blessed be all the angels of my Jesus, in their dazzling holiness and their admirable hierarchy, and in their service of love which they render to the Lord God; and blessed be most specially the guardian angel which my Jesus has chosen for me, and to whom He has entrusted me!

Blessed be all the Saints in the paradise of my Jesus!

Blessed be the Holy Souls in Purgatory, sorrowful spouses of my Jesus! I entreat Him to admit them as quickly as possible to the nuptial chamber of His glory. May He be blessed in His rigorous justice with regard to

them, and in the unspeakable joy which He holds in store for them!

Blessed be each true servant of my Jesus who upon earth fights the good fight, beneath the banner of the cross, and for love of Him!

Blessed be the Holy Church of my Jesus on earth, the Church Catholic, Apostolic, Roman.

Blessed be my Jesus in the most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, celebrated unceasingly throughout the world by Catholic priests!

Blessed be my Jesus in the most Holy Sacrament of the altar, in every place where He deigns to reside beneath the sacred species, in order to put to the proof our faith and our love, to nourish our souls, and to cheer us in our exile. May He be blessed, exalted and passionately adored!

Lauda Sion Salvatorem,
Lauda ducem et pastorem,
In hymnis et canticis.
Quantum potes tantum aude,
Quia major omni laude,
Nec laudare sufficis!

Blessed be my Jesus in the other sacraments which His Heart full of love has instituted so as to provide for all our spiritual needs during our pilgrimage here below!

Blessed be my Jesus in the glory of Paradise, enthroned at the right hand of His Eternal Father, having Mary on His right, *in vestitu deaurato,* surrounded by the shining cohorts of the nine choirs of blessed angels and all the orders of the Saints; my Jesus who at the same time, in the very heart of these splendours, deigns to think of me, and to love me! O tender Jesus, my brother and Bridegroom of my soul, when wilt

Thou call me to the abode of perfect charity? Meanwhile I shall not cease to praise and bless Thee.

Blessed be the Heart of my Jesus in glory, ever burning with intensest love for us!

Blessed be the five wounds of my Jesus which He displays before His eternal Father to soothe His righteous ire against the sins of the world!

Blessed be the adorable brow of my Jesus which will eternally show the marks of the cruel thorns with which He was crowned, and His most gentle countenance, which was shamed by blows and covered with spittle, but whose beauty now fills with its splendours the whole of the heavenly Jerusalem! *Lucerna ejus est Agnus.* (Apoc. xxi, 23.)

Blessed be the most gentle eyes of my Saviour Jesus, which wept over Jerusalem, and over all sinners—especially over me, the worst of all! Would I had been allowed to wipe away those tears, O my Love, and to behold Thee rejoicing in our good works and wholly cheered by them.

Blessed be the lips of my Jesus, which have uttered words so full of pity, which call me by name and which address me with smiles so alluring and so encouraging!—I can no longer resist Thee, Conqueror of my soul. Each one of Thy sweet smiles is an arrow which pierces me through and through. Would that by them I could die! Delightsome death!

Blessed be my Jesus in all His mysteries, past, present and yet to come! *Benedictus et superexaltatus et gloriosus in saecula!* (Dan. iii, 52.) Worthy to be praised and glorified and exalted above all for ever!

CHAPTER XXXIV

The Christ of the Prayer of Simplicity

WHEN the fervent Christian has for many years explored the vast field of the contemplation of Jesus, undertaking separately each of His mysteries as they come in their turn throughout the liturgical year, doing this over and over again and each time going deeper and deeper into them, a time comes at last when his soul will be enabled, by a special grace of God, to view her Beloved at one glance as it were, and to practise in His regard the Prayer of Simplicity.

In this one glance the mystic takes a comprehensive and simplified view of Our Lord, and lives on it. He is able to put into the one word *Jesus* all that the Saints put into it; all that we feel a St. Catherine of Siena put into it, for instance, when she used to write at the end of each of her letters: "Jesus! dear Jesus!"

Whoever conceives the noble ambition of reaching such a state of contemplation, ought before anything else, ardently and unceasingly to pray for it. In the second place, he ought to make attempts at it; not that he should pretend to reach it by his own efforts: he knows full well he cannot do that; but he wishes thereby to prepare himself for it, so that Our Lord, seeing his ardent desire, may be graciously pleased to grant it.

Let, therefore, the enamoured contemplative make to himself in the secret of his heart a small picture of his Lord and Love, which he will carry in his mind and at which he will be gazing rapturously whenever he is disengaged from creatures.

Thus we see an earthly lover do in regard to the idol of his heart. If he be a rich man he will have a tiny image of that person engraved or painted in enamel and set in a locket of precious metal and rare workmanship and carry it everywhere with him, held by a chain round his neck. When alone, he will be looking at it incessantly, covering it with burning kisses and fondly telling it of his love. If his condition be too poor to allow of this, what of it? Is not love the most wonderful limner and engraver? He will then make in imagination his own drawing of the object of his affections, paint it with more than earthly colours, enshrine it in the locket of his own heart of hearts and never be done contemplating it there and holding sweet converse with it.

Let then the contemplative frame and paint for himself a picture of his Beloved, small enough for him easily to carry about in his mind at all times, and yet accurate enough to give him a full consciousness of the diverse elements which go to make the infinite loveliness of Our Lord.

All the mysteries of Jesus come under one or the other of these four heads:

1. That He is our very *God.*

2. That He makes himself our true *Brother* by flesh and blood and the affections of a human heart.

3. That He is our *Hostia pacifica* as well as Our High Priest, on Calvary, on our altars and on the altar of heaven.

4. That He is our heavenly *Bridegroom* in time and eternity.

We have these four aspects of Our Lord presented to us in the Apostles' Creed, which we recite every day. That Jesus Christ is God is expressed in the words: "I believe in God . . . and in Jesus Christ, His only Son Our Lord." That He is our Brother is set forth in these terms: "Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." That He is our Priest and oblation, in these: "Who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried." Finally that He is our glorious heavenly Spouse is shown in these last words: "The third day He rose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven, sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead."

In these few lines of the Apostles' Creed we have the whole adorable person of Christ finely drawn for us; with a sketch of His wonderful career, starting from the height of heaven to return even to the highest throne therein—all so simply put that the ignorant, the uneducated, the very young are not debarred from the privilege of learning it by heart, carrying it about so to say everywhere with them, and making it, if they wish, the constant object of their loving contemplation.

This compendious manner of looking at our Blessed Lord may even derive some encouragement and corroboration from Holy Scripture. We

have all read of the grand and marvellous vision that was given first to Ezechiel, the Prophet, on the banks of the river Chobar; and then, centuries after, to St. John the Evangelist, in the Island of Patmos. They respectively and at a great distance of time saw four living winged creatures in the midst of a whirlwind and a great cloud of fire: "*One with the face of a lion, another with the face of a man, a third resembling an ox and the fourth with the countenance of an eagle. Their wings were joined to one another and they went together straight forward whither the impulse of the spirit was for them to go.*" (Ezech. i, 10-12.)

All Christian antiquity is agreed that these four symbolical creatures are types of the four Evangelists and a clear prophecy of Him about whom they speak. But what I wish here to point out is how admirably it answers our present purpose of paving the way for us to the Prayer of Simplicity. We perceive in the lion the image of the irresistible strength of the Divinity of Christ; and in the figure of the Man, the mystery of His Incarnation, and in the figure of the Ox, which is the beast of sacrifice, an allusion to the mystery of our Redemption and Sanctification by His death on the Cross and His symbolical death on our altars, and finally in the Eagle, swooping down to his quarry and soaring on high with it in his talons, the image of His conquering love, which will not rest until He has carried us bodily into Paradise, there to make us share in the feast of His eternal Nuptials.

God, Brother, Oblation, Bridegroom: these four aspects of Our Lord and Love we must

link together in the memory of our hearts, so that whichever of His mysteries we may happen at any time to be contemplating, these four aspects of Him present themselves at the same time, claim our attention and admiration and inspire the ardent ejaculations that we will surely be prompted to produce.

This manner of lovingly contemplating Our Lord, besides paving the way to the Prayer of Simplicity, has a wonderful effect on the person of the Christian who practises it. It makes him reproduce in himself the features of His divine Master as shown in the vision of Ezechiel and St. John. He becomes figuratively, a Lion, a Man, an Ox and an Eagle.

The Lion is the king of beasts. Its bearing is noble; its strength irresistible; its very roar carries dismay into the hearts of its enemies. The mystic shows himself a lion by subduing all the mean passions of the flesh and the spirit; covetousness, lust, pride, anger, and by overcoming the world and the devil.

He becomes a Man after the image of Jesus; that is to say a new man, a regenerate man, a man fully grown in Christ, gentle and strong, meek and humble, loving and merciful, a very son of God, not of Belial; carrying everywhere and spreading around him the sweet perfume of his evident brotherhood with Jesus Christ.

Is that all? It is already much, but it is not all. He becomes so to speak a beast of sacrifice: ready, willing, eager to suffer, to shed his very blood if called upon to do so, to give his life for the honour of God and the good of the brethren;

uniting himself with his whole heart and soul to the sacrifice of the divine Victim on Calvary and on our altars; partaking eagerly of the flesh and the blood of Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist, that he may at the same time imbibe His fortitude in life and death; that he may, if need be, endure the most cruel privations and tortures, even as the martyrs, even as his Beloved Lord.

One more trait of resemblance to his divine Master is realized in him. He becomes an eagle. Even as Jesus kept the gaze of His human soul unflinchingly fixed upon the blazing Sun of the divine Essence; in like manner does our contemplative soar high above all petty concerns of temporal life and keep the gaze of his soul steadily fixed upon the Sacred Humanity of his Lord, that blazing Sun of Justice whose mysteries are like so many sunbeams which spread the divine splendour far and wide.

When the aspirant to the Prayer of Simplicity has by the grace of God become thus mortified, transfigured, sacrificed and ecstatic, Our Lord grants him the object of his ardent desire. The four previous considerations of the mysteries of Jesus are finally bound for him together into one, which is of infinite sweetness. Then does the mystic exclaim in the transport of his joy: *A bundle of myrrh is my Beloved to me: He shall abide between my breasts.* (Cant. i, 12.)

CHAPTER XXXV

The Whole Christ

IT is no novelty to speak of the *Whole Christ.* This expression carries with it the best interpretation of some particularly characteristic passages of St. Paul.

It is St. Augustine who first directed my attention to this aspect of Our Lord. I here subjoin a certain number of texts which I collected from various works of his, at a time when I had no intention of writing and publishing books. As my aim then was solely to minister to my own edification, I neglected to mark down chapter and verse and even the titles of the works whence I extracted them: hence I must beg my kind reader either to look them up for himself or accept them on trust.

Christus tribus modis dicitur in Scripturis: ut Deus, ut Deus et homo, ut caput et corpus. Christ is spoken of in the Scriptures under three different aspects: as God, as God made man, as head and body.

Totum quod annuntiatur de Christo, caput et corpus est.—Whatsoever is predicted of Christ is head and body.

Christus et membra ejus unus est Christus.—Christ and His members form one only Christ.

Ipsa caro Christi caput Ecclesiae est.—The very flesh of Christ is the head of the Church.

Adjuncta ejus carni Ecclesia fit Christus totus,

caput et corpus.—Join the Church to the flesh of Christ and you have the whole Christ, head and body.

Christus et Ecclesia, caput et corpus, unus homo est, unus Christus.—Christ and His Church, the head with the body, that is one man, one only Christ.

Christi substantia populus ejus.—The Christian people is Christ's very substance.

Christus totus in corpore et in capite.—The whole Christ is equally found in the body and in the head.

Christus in membris suis.—Christ is in His members.

Voluit esse nobiscum unus qui est cum Patre unus.—He chose to be one with us even as He is one with the Father.

Non dedignatus est assumere nos in se.—He has deigned to assume us in Himself.

Christus solet in se membrorum suorum transferre personam.—Christ is wont to transfer into His own self the persons of His members.

Christus ex nobis omnibus tanquam membris unum corpus sibi facit.—Christ is building to Himself a body made up of all of us as His members.

Non solum Christiani sed Christus facti sumus.—Not only are we made Christians, but we are made Christ.

CHRISTUS TOTUS *haereditatem Patris accepturus est, nondum accepit.*—It is "the Whole Christ" that shall receive the Father's heritage: He has not as yet received it.

We may, in a limited sense, apply to Our

Lord the epithet of the whole Christ, even now, inasmuch as He has already a mystical body, made up of the Church Triumphant, the Church Suffering and the Church Militant, such as they are at present. This is already a view of Our Lord extremely sweet and consoling; and it is well for us to contemplate Him in that light. It will serve moreover to put in full relief the dogma of the Communion of Saints.

The ancient philosopher Pythagoras pretended to be listening to the music of the heavenly spheres. Much more truly is it given us to listen, if we will, to the harmony of the Church Militant, Suffering and Triumphant. It will give us the last word on that grand IN CHRISTO, so much emphasized and celebrated by St. Paul, and beautifully commented upon in the books of Abbot Vonier, especially in his PERSONALITY OF CHRIST, chapter xvi.

The Communion of Saints implies the following divine facts: 1, Union of all the members, wherever situated, into one body; 2, Reciprocal love of all the members; 3, Mutual communication of their spiritual goods; 4, Union of all to the head which is Christ; 5, Identification of each of them with Christ.

These two together, Jesus and the Christian, form one Christ in two persons. They are indeed two distinct persons, and yet they form one and the same Christ, without either of the two losing his own personality. This is very felicitously expressed in the famous words of St. Paul: *I live now not I, but Christ liveth in me.* (Gal. ii, 20.) These words are often wrongly quoted as meaning the intensity of the love of St. Paul

for Christ. In reality that is not their meaning, as anyone may see for himself by reading attentively the context, from, let us say, verse 16 to verse 21. All this passage, and verse 20 along with the rest, is purely and simply the theological statement of a divine fact, which applies to every Christian in the state of grace.

Now as this marvellous union and identification with Christ takes place in all the brethren, they are therefore all one in Christ, all one with Christ, all one with the others, all one Christ together. My brother is not only Christ's (*Christi*), but Christ (*Christus*). All my brethren in heaven, in purgatory, and here on earth, not only are Christ's, but they are, one and all, Christ in very deed. When I do any kindness to my brother on earth, Christ is the recipient of this. When I offer Mass or some prayer for the Holy Souls, it is Christ to whom I afford relief in their persons. When I honour the dear Saints in Paradise, it is Christ whom I am praising in them. Now I understand better the full import of these words of the Supreme Judge at the end of the world, addressing Himself to the elect: *I was hungry and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; naked and you covered me; sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me.* (Matt. xxv, 35-36.)

Grand doctrine this, which ought to break down the last resistance of my perverse and corrupt nature to the love of my neighbour, so peremptorily enforced throughout the New Testament. Meanwhile let us not omit to notice in all this intercommunion of the threefold

Church of all the Saints, the activities of Our Lord, the wonderful activities by which He binds us all together in one, drawing us all to Himself, making us all one with Himself.

We were all one all together in Adam before ever we were born, and that is why we have all sinned in Adam (Mary alone excepted), and we have all lapsed and been lost in Adam. Now it is required that we should all become one in Christ, in order that we may be saved. Whosoever separates himself from Christ damns himself.

It may not be amiss to make here one more observation about the Communion of Saints. It seems to me that it is in our intercourse with the Blessed Virgin Mary and the other saints that the words of St. Paul: *Our conversation is in heaven* (Phil. ii, 20), find their literal fulfilment and verification. For, in order to converse with Our Lord, the mystic has only to visit Him in His Blessed Sacrament; and in order to converse with the Most Holy Trinity or any of the Three Divine Persons in particular, he has only to retire into his own heart. So that it is really devotion to the dear Saints which compels us, in a way, to break into Paradise.

This is a very precious aspect of devotion to the Saints. God is indeed with us and we are with God and in God; but the dear Saints are no more with us; they are in heaven. If I want to have converse with any of them, I must, by faith, in spirit, go right up there and enter right in. It is true that I do not thereby leave the earth of my pilgrimage, and yet it is equally true

that I am for the time being, admitted to their blessed company, in their abode which is paradise. I am successful to the extent, at any rate, of obtaining a hearing, whatever answer they, in their charity, in the light of God, may see fit to vouchsafe me.

The same holds good also in regard to our having converse with the Holy Souls. We must go right in; we must by faith and in spirit go down into Purgatory. I would suggest as one of the best possible practices of piety, that besides praying for the Holy Souls, we make it our business thus to visit them in their fiery prison. Besides procuring them additional solace, it would have the most salutary effect upon the whole tenor of our own Christian life. If I mistake not, this is true mysticism.

Now to return to our concept of the " whole Christ." After what we have just said about the limited sense in which the expression applies at present to Our Lord, it follows that the whole Christ in His final integrity will be fulfilled only at the end of the world, after the general Resurrection and at the conclusion of the Last Judgement. Then will the Lord Jesus, the Lamb of God, the Heavenly Bridegroom have with Him His Bride, the Church of the elect, blessed angels and risen saints, in their full number, each crowned with the glory of all the good works he did whilst in life, and their after-effects during the time that elapsed till the end of the world; arrayed in the order of the final hierarchy, which is based upon no other consideration than the degree of love of God each one will have attained. Then as Our Lord has warned us

beforehand, some of the last will be first. Some humble lay brothers, some ignorant goodwives who did not shine in the least during their lives, will, on account of the intensity of their charity, be raised above priests, doctors, abbots, bishops, popes even, and placed in the highest choir among the resplendent Seraphim.

The Lord Jesus under this aspect is still unfulfilled, still in the making, as it were, and it is our privilege, whilst on earth, to take a hand, if we will, in the mighty work of His being brought to completion.

Adam needed Eve; the New Adam wants an Eve worthy of Himself. *The Lamb of God* wants for *His wife* (to use the expression of the Apocalypse) *the New Jerusalem*, that is to say the full congregation of the elect, *coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.* (Apoc. xxi, 2.)

CHAPTER XXXVI

Of the Final Unfolding of the Mystery of Christ

WE may distinguish in the unfolding of the mystery of Christ four successive eras or periods. The first began at that very beginning of all things created, which is recorded in the first verses of the Bible: *In the beginning God created heaven and earth; and the earth was void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the spirit of God moved over the waters; and God said: Be light made.* (Gen. i, 1-2.) An era in which, through the six mysterious days, all things are being made ready for the coming of the first human couple upon the scene of the world. Adam and Eve are the ancestors of Christ and they adumbrate Him already.

The second period then began with the creation of the first Adam. It extends through the antediluvian and patriarchal ages and the whole history of the Hebrew race as the people of God, *to whom is made the Promise* (Gal. iii, 16), even unto the actual coming upon the scene of the world of the second Adam, better than the first. This is Our Lord Jesus Christ who comes now to repair the great damage done by the disobedience of our first parents. Mighty events take place during this period, such as the corruption of all mankind, the great Flood, the propagation of the race all over the world, the

spreading of idolatry among the Gentiles, the rise and fall of mighty empires, the foundation of Rome and its conquest of the world. The misery and degradation of the whole human race proclaim loudly how much it is in need of a Saviour.

The third period extends from the birth of Our Lord, through all the centuries past and yet to come of the Christian era, to what Jesus calls the *Regeneration* (Matt. xix, 28), or rebirth. Then all men having been raised from the dust, the Son of Man shall come with divine majesty and infinite power to judge the living and the dead and to render to every one according to his works. This era is characterized by the wonderful process of the vocation of the Gentiles, and the formation of the Church of the elect, which, when entirely fulfilled, is to be the immaculate, all-beautiful bride of the Lamb of God.

Now these three first periods, taken altogether, are but the preparation for the fourth and final and eternal one, which is called enigmatically by Isaias *the World to come* and more clearly and joyfully by St. John in the Apocalypse *the Nuptials of the Lamb.*

This last era will be inaugurated at the moment when, having sent the reprobates to their doom, Our Blessed Lord will pronounce these words pregnant with mysterious, blissful meaning: *Behold I make all things new.* (Apoc. xxi, 5.)

Then shall we see the last unfolding of the *mystery of Christ:* and we shall be in it, a part of it, if we have been to the very end faithful,

living members of His Church. But no words of man could give the slightest inkling of what it will be like.

EPILOGUE

Reader, we are at the end of our journey.

This, then, is the way of the loving contemplation of Our Lord. The fervent Christian in his pious, prayerful meditation of the mysteries of the life of Christ, as they present themselves one after the other in the sacred liturgy, draws near to the heart of his Saviour, nay boldly penetrates right into it, for the lance of the soldier has made this an easy task. From the Sacred Heart he passes into the very Soul of Jesus and delightfully loses himself for a while in its all but infinite depths. But he soon finds therein a golden door, at which he has no sooner knocked than it opens of itself and admits him into the sanctuary of the divine nature of Our Lord, the Godhead of the Word.

Speechless, swooning for very excess of joy, turned into a tiny spark of intensest fire of love, this happy mortal discovers that he is now, with the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, in the ineffably sweet company of the Father and the Holy Ghost. He can now truly begin to live that *life hid with Christ in God* (Coloss. iii, 3), of which St. Paul speaks. He can now proceed to the obscure and yet most illuminating and comforting contemplation of the Divine Essence of the Most Holy Trinity. This matter will be the burden of our next treatise.

And now, before we close this volume, and

as a fitting conclusion to it, O my soul, let us sing a hymn to the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us sing to Him, with the whole Church Militant, Suffering and Triumphant:

Tu Rex gloriae, Christe.
Tu Patris sempiternus es Filius.
Tu ad liberandum suscepturus hominem, non horruisti Virginis uterum.
Tu devicto mortis aculeo, aperuisti credentibus regna coelorum.
Tu ad dexteram Dei sedes, in gloria Patris.
*Judex crederis esse venturus.**

Tu solus sanctus.
Tu solus Dominus.
Tu solus Altissimus, JESU CHRISTE.
CUM SANCTO SPIRITU,
IN GLORIA DEI PATRIS.† AMEN.

THE END

* Thou, O Christ, art the King of glory. Thou art the eternal Son of the Father. In order to save us, thou hast not disdained to take our human nature in the Virgin's womb. Thou hast broken the goad of death and opened the kingdom of heaven to those who have faith. Thou art seated at the right hand of God, in the glory of the Father. We firmly believe in thy next coming as Judge. (Extract from the *Te Deum.*)

† Thou alone art holy. Thou alone art the Lord. Thou alone art the Most High, O Christ Jesus, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of the Father. Amen. (Extract from the *Gloria in Excelsis.*)

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